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THE ALLIED PLOTS THAT FOOLED THE FÜHRER



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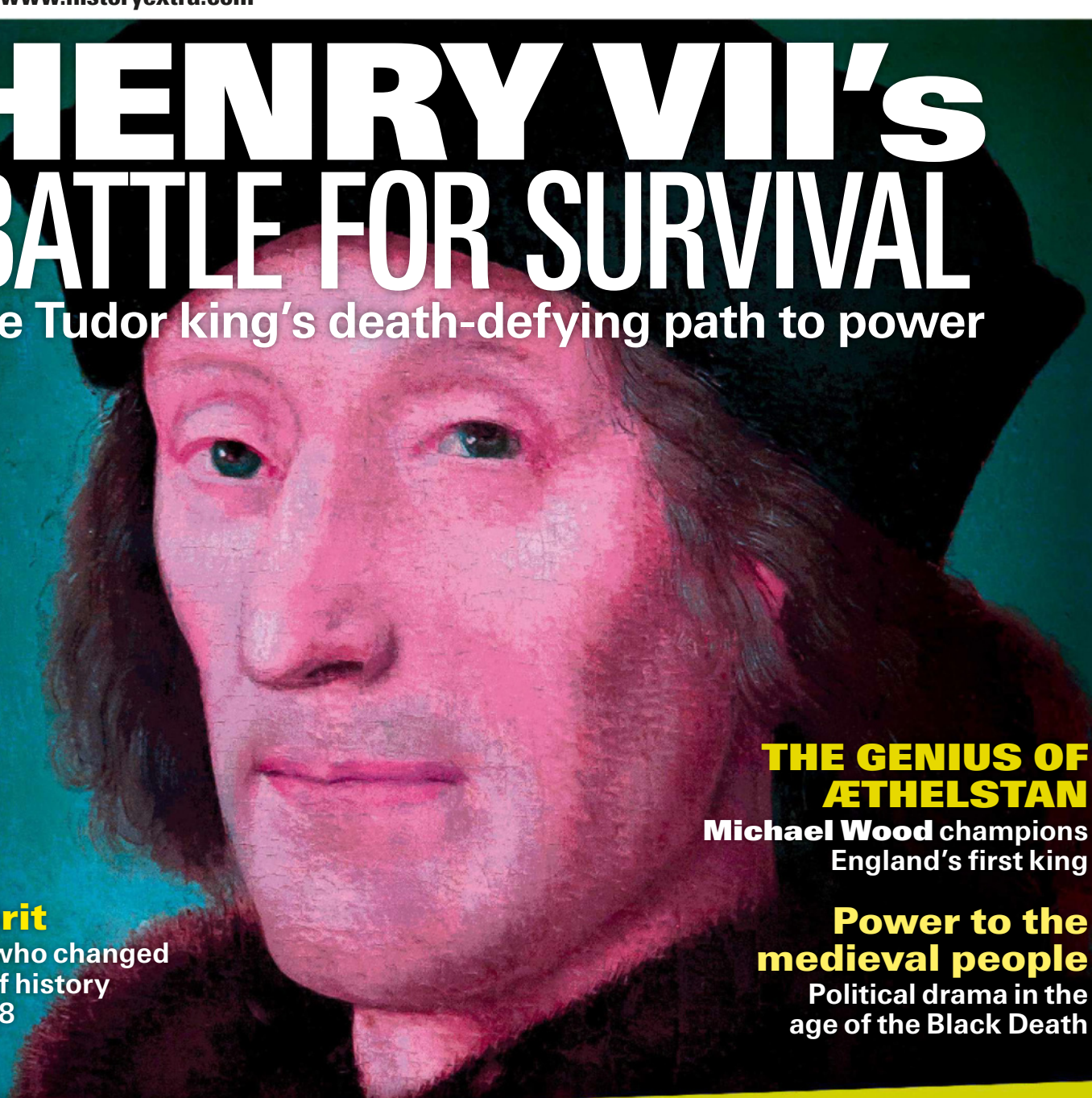
MAGAZINE

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING HISTORY MAGAZINE

September 2024 / www.historyextra.com

HENRY VII's BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

The Tudor king's death-defying path to power



THE GENIUS OF ÆTHELSTAN

Michael Wood champions
England's first king

Power to the medieval people

Political drama in the
age of the Black Death

Teen spirit

The people who changed
the course of history
– aged just 18



The suffragettes' secret weapon

How PR stunts took their message to the masses



VOTES FOR WOMEN
MEETING
to demand the Enfranchisement of Women, and to protest against the exclusion of Women from a share in Law-Making
ESSEX HALL, ESSEX ST. STRAND
ON MONDAY, NOV. 25
MRS. DESPARD
MISS IRENE MILLER
MRS. EDITH HOW MARTYN
MISS NEILANS

VOTES FOR WOMEN

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VOTES FOR WOMEN

DEEDS NOT WORDS

THE SUFFRAGETTE STORY

With their radical demands for votes for women, the suffragettes shook up Edwardian Britain. But their campaign for equal rights would see them not just rallying crowds with speeches and marching on the streets, but setting fire to politicians' homes and planting bombs in public places.

Listen now at
historyextra.com/suffragettes-series



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2023 WINNER



“ The Tudors are such stalwart figures in English history and historical fiction that it’s hard to imagine that the dynasty might never have come to rule. And yet their path to the throne required a huge amount of fortune – and not just on the battlefield at Bosworth. Nathen Amin’s cover feature this month takes us back to **the young life of Henry VII**, revealing quite how often that life hung by a thread. It’s a lesser-known chapter in the Tudor drama, and one that I hope you’ll enjoy reading about on page 32.

If you were one of those who enjoyed the BBC drama *SAS: Rogue Heroes*, you might recall Dominic West’s portrayal of the flamboyant Dudley Clarke, who helped found the special forces organisation. But while the SAS may be his best-known legacy, **Clarke was an all-round master of deception** who achieved particularly astonishing successes in the desert war. Robert Hutton has researched his life for a new biography, and he introduces us to a man of rare talents on page 24.

Women of rare talents are also in the spotlight this month, as Ellie Cawthorne reveals **the suffragettes’ genius for propaganda**. From posters and marches to chocolates and board games, Ellie highlights how they were able to transform their image and take their cause to the masses. Later on, that quest for headlines took a darker turn, as bombs, arson and vandalism were added to the suffragette arsenal, arguably doing more harm than good to the campaign. Turn to page 50 to discover a story with remarkable modern resonances.

Rob Attar
Editor



THREE THINGS I’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. Mary’s miracle

In our *Books Interview*, Alice Loxton charts Mary Anning’s tragic early life. The future palaeontologist lost several family members, but also survived against the odds when a tree she was sheltering under was struck by lightning, killing those around her (page 70).

2. Picture that

The Victorian artist Rossetti was a fascinating character, but I didn’t know that he kept a bizarre menagerie in his London home, including a toucan “which he dressed in a cowboy’s hat and trained to ride around on the back of a llama” (page 47).

3. Regal legal

One fascinating fact that’s included in our piece on the Plantagenet state is that Edward I created so much legislation that he was later known as ‘the English Justinian’ (page 67).



THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS



Kerry Brown

“China is often in the news these days. But, for Britain, relations with this vast country go back four centuries to the time of Elizabeth I. Britain has a huge China story – one it rarely speaks about, but one it should definitely celebrate more.”

Kerry chronicles Britain and China’s long relationship on page 56



Kavita Puri

“The 2021 census revealed that British Asians are the largest ethnic minority group in Britain. Yet we are only now starting to understand British south Asian history more widely, let alone its complex nature.”

Kavita considers the value of specialist history months in her column on page 20



Nathen Amin

“To understand the suspicion and paranoia of the first Tudor king, Henry VII, is to delve into his perilous youth and understand his dangerous and uncertain path to the throne.”

Nathen charts the monarch’s turbulent quest for the crown on page 32



Alice Loxton

“In the past, there were a lot more young people around. There were also old people, of course, but they weren’t such a large chunk of the population, as they are today.”

Alice profiles the young people who made a lasting impact on history on page 70

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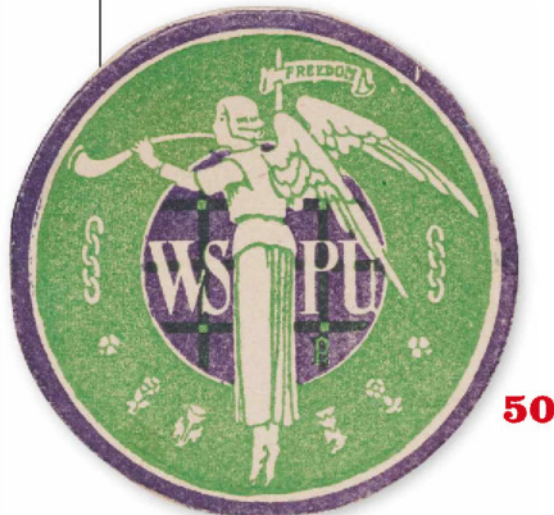
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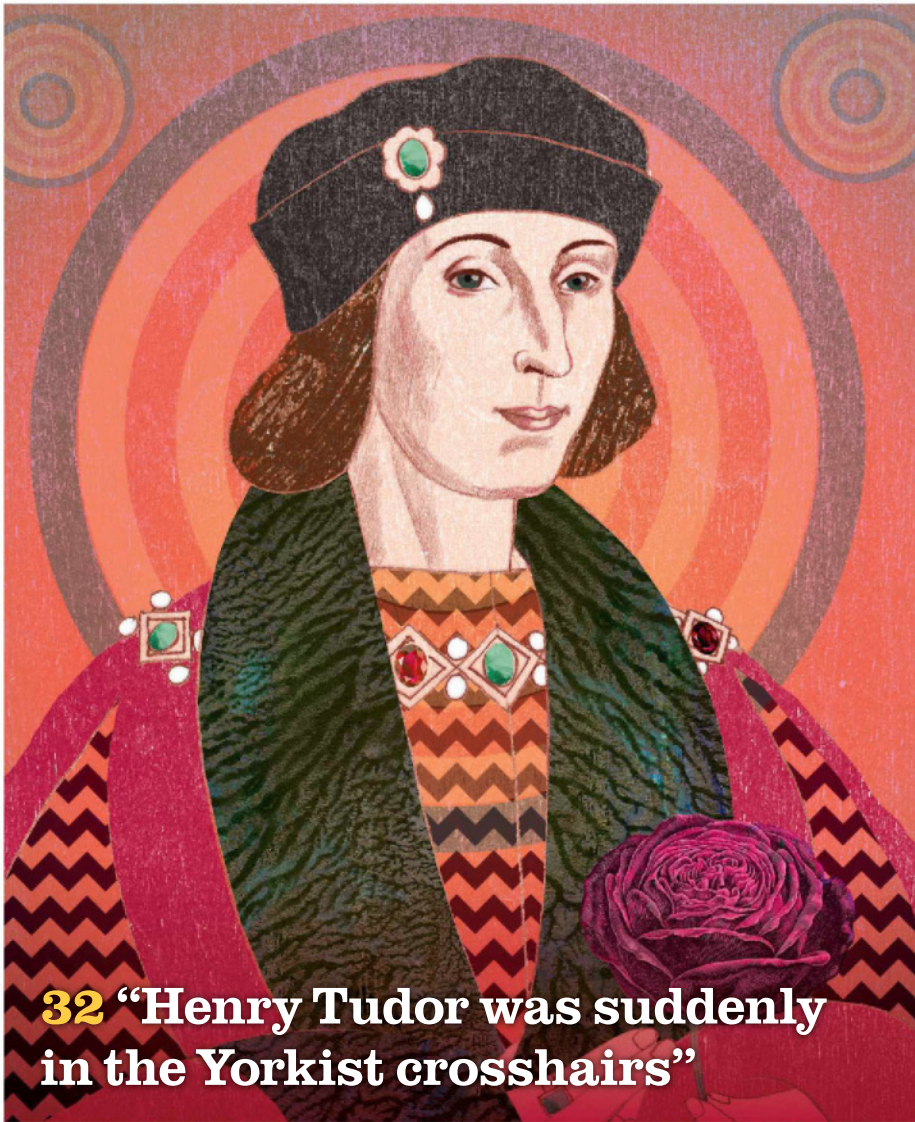


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32 “Henry Tudor was suddenly in the Yorkist crosshairs”

MUSEUM OF LONDON/SARAH YOUNG/ALAMY/JENNI NOTT



24

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ANNIVERSARIES

DANNY BIRD highlights events that took place in September in history

28 SEPTEMBER 48 BC

Pompey meets a violent end

The Roman statesman misjudges his Egyptian hosts

As Pompey the Great approached the shore near Pelusium in the Nile Delta, he was confident that the Egyptian king Ptolemy XIII would grant him asylum. Weeks earlier, the Roman general and his eastern Mediterranean allies had been defeated at the battle of Pharsalus in Greece by Julius Caesar, whose march on Rome the year before had plunged the republic into civil war.

Pompey's wife, Cornelia, was anxious as he and his entourage approached Egypt – and with good reason: things were about to go disastrously awry for him. The historian Plutarch recounts that a Roman soldier named Septimius, who was serving the Egyptian court, “ran him through the body with his sword”. Onlookers were horrified as Pompey was then killed by a frenzy of dagger blows, dying a day shy of his 58th birthday. His assassins then decapitated him, leaving his body in the surf.

Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus had been celebrated for his military and political skills. He was famous for major victories in Africa and Spain, and helped suppress Spartacus's slave revolt. At the age of 35, he had become consul, later forming a powerful political alliance, the First Triumvirate, with Caesar and Crassus. That fell apart after Crassus's death, leading to tension between the two survivors. The resulting civil war was won decisively by Caesar, and Pompey went on the run.

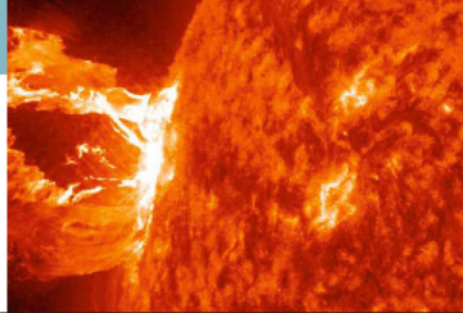
His hopes for sanctuary in Egypt were shattered when Ptolemy, influenced by his advisor Pothinus, elected to support Caesar by eliminating his rival. Yet they miscalculated Caesar's gratitude. On being presented with Pompey's severed head, the Roman leader recoiled in horror and scolded the Ptolemies for their barbarism.

Julius Caesar is horrified at the sight of Pompey's severed head in Egypt, as depicted in an 18th-century Italian painting



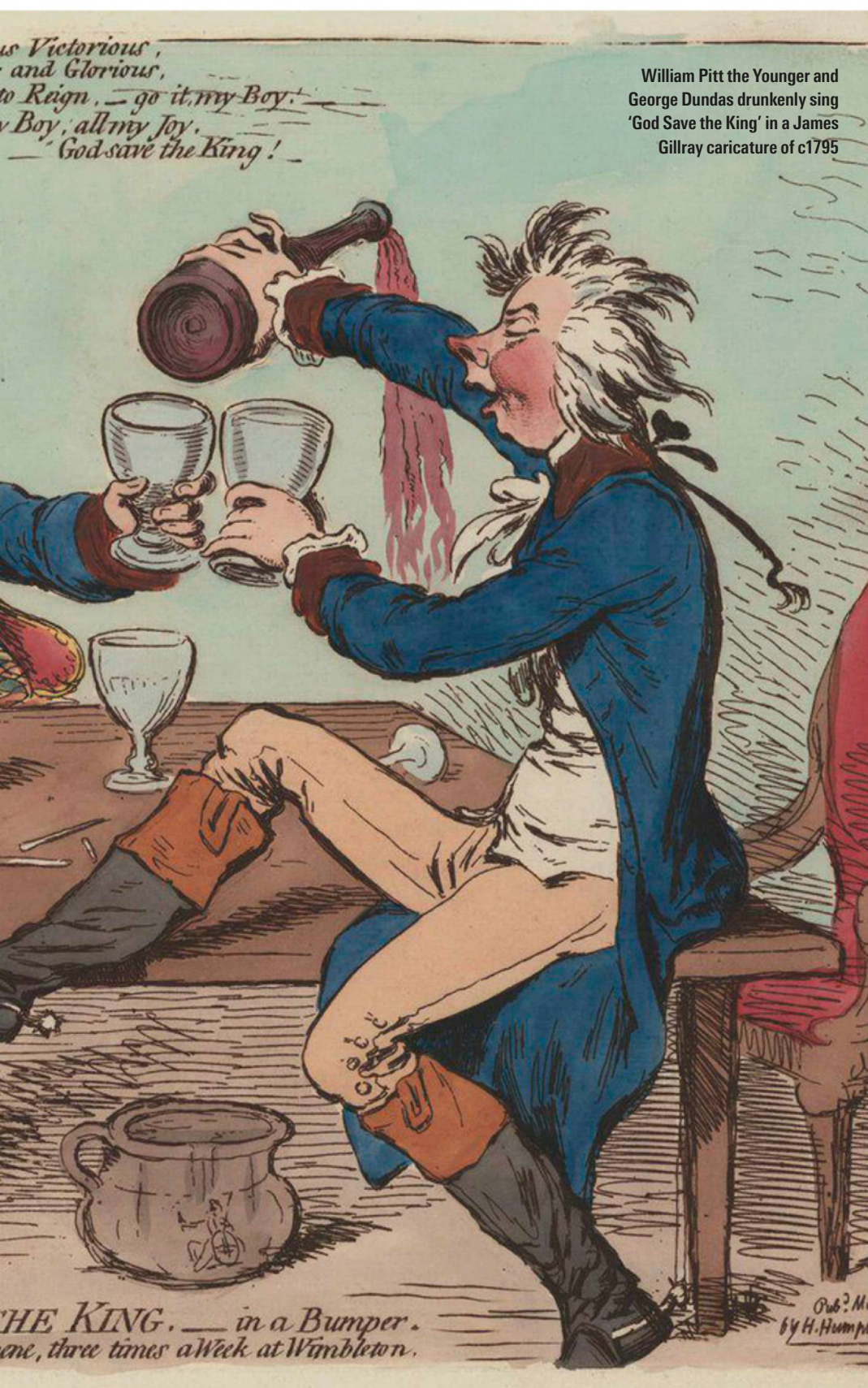
GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/NASA

A coronal mass ejection accompanying a huge solar flare caused a global geomagnetic storm on Earth



1 SEPTEMBER 1859

While sketching sunspots, Richard Carrington observes a **blinding solar flare**. The accompanying coronal mass ejection hits Earth 17.6 hours later, causing a global geomagnetic storm. Telegraphs fail and auroras appear over the tropics in an episode remembered as the Carrington Event.



William Pitt the Younger and George Dundas drunkenly sing 'God Save the King' in a James Gillray caricature of c1795

28 SEPTEMBER 1745

A royal anthem is first performed

'God Save the King' debuts amid national turmoil

When news reached London that the Jacobite forces of Prince Charles Edward Stuart – recently dubbed 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' – had triumphed over King George II's army east of Edinburgh at Prestonpans on 21 September 1745, panic ensued.

Undaunted, the orchestra at the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane prepared to perform Thomas Arne's new setting of an older piece. After the curtain had fallen on that evening's play, three soloists struck up the now-familiar refrain of 'God Save the King'. The audience responded with rhapsodic enthusiasm: *The Daily Advertiser* reported that those in attendance "encored with repeated Huzzas". After that unheralded debut, 'God Save the King' became a nightly fixture on Drury Lane, soon spreading to other theatres. London had made clear its allegiance to the Hanoverian dynasty and rejection of the Stuart insurgency.

Initially, 'God Save the King' was merely a patriotic ditty, part of a repertoire that included Arne's 'Rule Britannia' and Handel's 'Hallelujah chorus'. But the song's popularity grew, and it was often played to greet monarchs attending theatrical productions.

The precise origin of the song's lyrics is disputed, but the melody may date back to the 17th century. Ironically, the tune may first have been heard during the coronation of James II and VII (for whom the Jacobites would be named) in 1685. By the 19th century, it had been unofficially adopted as Britain's 'national' anthem. The first coronation at which it was sung was that of George IV in 1821.

Beyond Britain's shores, during the 19th century the melody was adopted by several European states, including the Russian and German empires. The tune was even used for the 1831 American patriotic song 'My Country, 'Tis of Thee'.

30 SEPTEMBER 1946

The sentences of 22 Nazi German leaders are read out in Nuremberg over the course of two days, following a trial prosecuted by the International Military Tribunal. Convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity, 12 are condemned to death.



Former Nazi officials Hermann Göring and Rudolf Hess during the Nuremberg trials, 1946

**2-6 SEPTEMBER 1666**

The Great Fire of London rages

The terrifying inferno destroys four-fifths of the city

Legend has it that when the lord mayor of London, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, was roused from his sleep on 2 September to be told his city was on fire, he retorted: "Pish! A woman might piss it out!"

That morning, a fire had broken out in Thomas Farriner's bakery on Pudding Lane,

near London Bridge. Blazes were fairly common at that time, but now a long, hot, dry summer had turned the city's largely wooden infrastructure into a tinderbox.

Within hours, 300 houses had been consumed, and the fire spread rapidly, whipped up by a strong easterly wind. In London's narrow warren of streets, lined with combustible timber-framed structures, the flames leapt easily from building to building. Efforts to control the fire using buckets of water soon failed, compelling many people to flee onto the river Thames or out to Hampstead and Moorfields.

By 3 September, the city's residents were in despair as the conflagration continued to spread. Rumours proliferated amid the ensuing chaos, and xenophobic attacks were carried out against Dutch and French

residents wrongly suspected of arson. That night brought no respite: the fire began to creep eastwards, threatening to ignite the gunpowder stores at the Tower of London.

Diarist Samuel Pepys was overcome by his city's destruction, writing that "it made me weep to see it". He arrived at the Palace of Whitehall to update Charles II, whereupon the king ordered the demolition of houses in the fire's path to create firebreaks. Yet even that proved to be in vain: the conflagration overwhelmed all efforts to contain it.

On 4 September, half of London was burning as the king and his brother, the Duke of York, joined in the firefighting efforts. That evening the city's cathedral, St Paul's, was engulfed by flames. As its roof melted and flowed off in a torrent of molten lead, the imposing Gothic edifice collapsed.

The Rosetta Stone is inscribed with a 196 BC decree in Greek, Egyptian hieroglyphic and demotic scripts: a linguistic key



27 SEPTEMBER 1822

French scholar Jean-François Champollion presents a paper at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in Paris, announcing that **he has deciphered ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs** by analysing the texts inscribed on the Rosetta Stone, found in the Nile Delta.

Flames engulf St Paul's Cathedral in the centre of this 17th-century Dutch painting of the Great Fire of London



It wasn't until 6 September, the fifth day of the blaze, that the flames were brought under control. Just one-fifth of London remained unscathed. More than 87 parish churches, 13,000 houses and numerous civic buildings had been destroyed, rendering hundreds of thousands of Londoners homeless. Remarkably, the deaths of just six people were recorded.

One positive outcome emerged, in the long term, at least: the fire had razed the city's most overcrowded, disease-ridden quarters. Christopher Wren set out ambitious plans to rebuild London; his masterpiece, the new St Paul's Cathedral, stands today as a testament to the city's resilience.

Meanwhile, the Monument was erected in Pudding Lane to commemorate the fire – a tribute to the hellish days of September 1666.

GETTY IMAGES



Princesses Stéphanie and Grace, with the latter's husband, Prince Rainier III of Monaco, in 1979

14 SEPTEMBER 1982

Grace Kelly dies following a car accident

The tragic death of the Hollywood actress-turned-princess stuns the world

In September 1982, the eyes of the world turned to Monaco as news broke that Princess Grace had died following a car accident near Monte Carlo.

Grace had suffered a stroke on 13 September while driving her Rover P6 3500, accompanied by her teenage daughter, Princess Stéphanie. She lost control of the car, which left the winding mountain road and plunged down an embankment. Stéphanie escaped with minor injuries, while onlookers rushed to extinguish the flames and rescue her mother.

Early reports suggested that Princess Grace had sustained broken bones but was otherwise stable. It was subsequently revealed, though, that she had complained of a headache and momentarily fainted.

Dr Jean Chatelain, chief surgeon at the hospital to which Grace was admitted, later confirmed that she had experienced a cerebral vascular incident. She then suffered a second haemorrhage, and never regained

consciousness. Keeping vigil at her bedside, Grace's husband, Prince Rainier, consented to withdrawing life support. She was pronounced dead shortly before 11pm, aged just 52.

Born in Philadelphia in November 1929 to a wealthy industrialist, Grace Kelly's talent had been apparent at a young age. With roles in films such as *Dial M for Murder* and *Rear Window*, she came to embody Hollywood glamour. She met Prince Rainier III of Monaco during the 1955 Cannes Film Festival, and their marriage the following year enchanted fans worldwide.

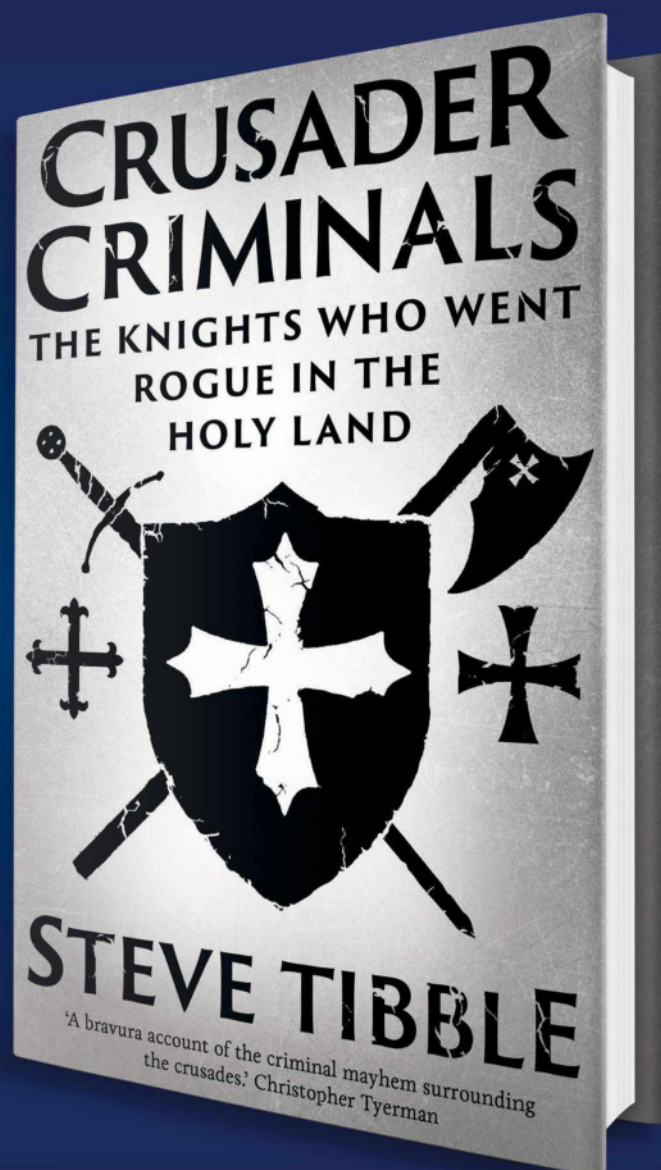
Conflicting reports spread about who had been driving. Rumours that Stéphanie, underage at the time, had been behind the wheel were denied.

Mourners at the funeral, held four days later in the Cathedral of Our Lady Immaculate in Monaco-Ville, included co-stars Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart, as well as Princess Diana. **H**

Danny Bird is staff writer on *BBC History Magazine*

‘A dark and gripping story ... Tibble’s history is a Hogarthian cavalcade of the murderers, thieves, pirates, rogues, and highwaymen who fought for Christ in the medieval Middle East’

Mark Gregory Pegg, author of *Beatrice’s Last Smile*



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THE CONVERSATION

EXPERTS DEBATE HISTORY'S BIGGEST ISSUES



LEFT TO RIGHT: British troops storm a Chinese fort during the Second Opium War, 1860; an anti-slavery medallion from 1787; anti-colonial campaigner Mahatma Gandhi in Downing Street in 1931



BIG QUESTIONS

“We wanted the public to be better informed about the history of empire”

A new book, *The Truth About Empire*, makes the case for the expertise of historians in debates about Britain's imperial past. **MATT ELTON** spoke to three of its contributors about the gap between academic and popular views of empire

THE PANEL

**Alan Lester**

is professor of historical geography at the University of Sussex, and editor of *The Truth About Empire*

**Bronwen Everill**

is director of the Centre of African Studies and lecturer in history at Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge. She is one of the book's contributors

**Sathnam Sanghera**

wrote the foreword to *The Truth About Empire*. His latest book is *Empireworld: How British Imperialism Has Shaped the Globe* (Viking, 2024)

Your new book features essays on the legacy of the British empire from academic historians at a range of institutions. What were your aims when you started work on the project?

Alan Lester British colonial history has become a highly controversial topic. We've seen a backlash against Black Lives Matter (BLM) and, in some quarters, an attempt to morally defend the British empire against the critique articulated by the BLM movement. In the midst of all that, I wanted to collect the work of expert historians and present it in a way the public could engage with – and, hopefully, help them be better informed when navigating what's become a really contested area of history.

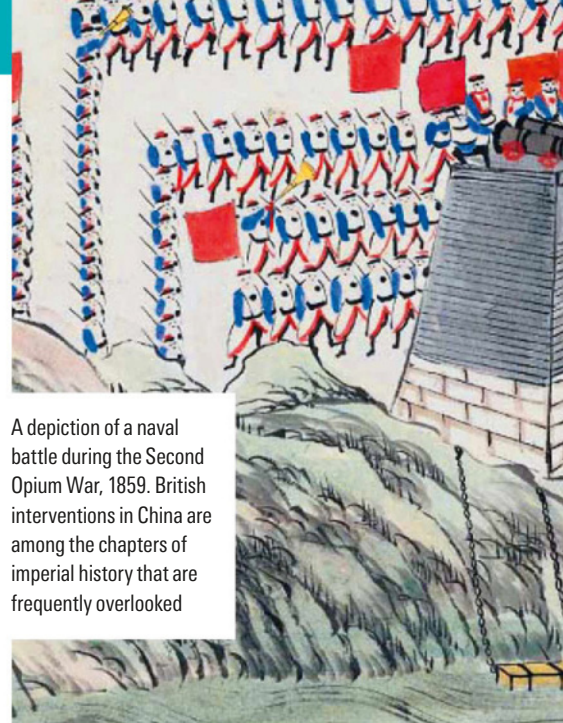
How did you choose which experts to call on to write the book's chapters?

AL I reached out to a vast number of people, and many were willing to expose themselves to the controversy that surrounds these topics. I ended up with a fairly good coverage both thematically, on the key issues at the heart of the controversy, and geographically, across the vastness of the British empire. Readers can hear from experts who have worked for many years to develop their expertise of these areas. And Sathnam, who has been able to engage the public on these issues more successfully than many academics, kindly agreed to write a foreword.

Were you conscious of the controversy when you were writing and editing the book, and is it a factor you have to bear in mind on a personal level more generally?

Sathnam Sanghera I've found myself in the middle of the culture war on empire, and the consequences can be quite dark. [Historian and broadcaster] David Olusoga has to employ a bodyguard at some events, while Corinne Fowler – who wrote the National Trust report on colonialism – was so concerned for her safety that she had to call the police and became scared to leave the house. I stopped doing events for a while because of the abuse I was facing. And all because of what we've written about history! So my involvement in this project is definitely inspired by personal experience.

Bronwen Everill I think that we're at an interesting moment for this topic. Despite the fact that experts have been working on it for decades, much of that work hasn't made its way into the wider public consciousness. Historians have moved the discussion on empire in all sorts of interesting new directions over many years, but even though the topic is currently



A depiction of a naval battle during the Second Opium War, 1859. British interventions in China are among the chapters of imperial history that are frequently overlooked

// I wanted to collect the work of expert historians and present it in a way the public could engage with //

ALAN LESTER

having a cultural moment, people aren't necessarily aware that all of that has been going on behind the scenes. So I think it's important to show that this isn't anything new or mysterious, but instead part of a wider, long-term conversation.

Alan, you highlighted the range of experts involved in the book. Were you also able to get a range of viewpoints on empire? Some readers may look at the book's title – *The Truth About Empire* – and think: is there a single truth?

AL This is a subject I agonised over in the book's introduction: what do we mean by 'truth'? How close can we get to it? Historians disagree about those issues. But it comes down to the questions we ask, the sources we use to answer them, and how we interpret those answers – whether we come to them with open minds and an agenda driven by curiosity, or whether we're cherry-picking bits of history to make a political case.

Contributors to the book have different politics and philosophical perspectives on the past. But whether we're conservative or more radical in our approach to history, we share an open-minded curiosity about the past and a good-faith engagement with the sources.



King George V crosses a river in Nepal, 1912. "Historians have moved the discussion on empire in all sorts of directions over many years," says Bronwen Everill



Is there a difference between public and academic perceptions of the topics you cover in this book?

BE I think there's now more widespread public acceptance of the idea that some aspects of the British empire were bad, particularly economic exploitation. Yet people sometimes look back on the trade in enslaved people and say, 'okay, the British empire had slave trading, but it also worked to end the slave trade after 1808 – so isn't that the good side of empire?'. The belief that it was the first nation to do so is used to argue the case that Britain was a world leader in using its empire for good, and that it forced everybody else to get rid of the slave trade too. In fact, other places banned the slave trade first.

SS There are two profound problems with the way in which the public understand history. One is that a lot of people leave school thinking that history is a fixed succession of facts. And the other is that so many people view British history through feeling, either pride or shame, when I don't think it should be seen through feeling at all, but approached as an intellectual exercise.

Bronwen, your chapter looks at slavery. Are there public misconceptions you'd like to see changed, or old views of slavery that still manifest today?

BE Some of those balance-sheet arguments I outlined above – which you find even in academia – have led to the idea that Britain rescued Africans from themselves. The idea is that the nation exerted its moral duty in the 19th century to teach Africans not to participate in the slave trade. But, actually, there's plenty of evidence of anti-slave-trade movements in Africa long before the British abolition movement.

Yet the British empire used this moral rationale for continued intervention across the 19th century, even in the division of the continent during the 'scramble for Africa'. The idea that African people couldn't be responsible for governing themselves was very pervasive.

Were there subjects that you specifically wanted to cover because you thought people didn't know enough about them?

AL There are whole areas that aren't really covered by popular media representations of empire. One example is the chapter on China by Robert Bickers, an expert at the University of Bristol. Because China was never formally colonised by Britain, it disappears off our mental map of the empire. Yet, via the Opium Wars and other military interventions that go under the



A painting from 1788 depicting the cruelty of slavery. "Britons were always a complicated lot," says Alan Lester. "When there were slave traders, there were also people arguing against slavery"

Some groups – History Reclaimed, for instance – regard academia and the media as being dominated by leftwing viewpoints. Did you bear that in mind when you were working on the book?

AL It's important to understand that history as a discipline and public awareness of history have changed. For a long time, history – and particularly imperial history – has been dominated by justifications for empire, and by white male British perspectives on how it was run and how beneficial it was for its subjects.

One change is that more women scholars have entered the field, particularly historians interested in aspects of gender that never got a look-in before. There are also more scholars of colour – though still nowhere near enough – and more appreciation of

what empire meant for those on its receiving end: for black and brown subjects of empire, rather than the white administrators. So the discipline has become more open and more inclusive, and started asking a wider range of questions of the past that have yielded more accurate, verifiable answers.

BE I appreciate what Alan's saying in terms of women and people of colour expanding academic horizons – but as a woman, I don't have to write women's history. Equally, if you are a person of colour writing about the history of empire, you don't have to necessarily write about the subjects of empire – you could write about its administrators.

I think part of the problem with the framing that some groups want to impose is that they seem to be saying that, as more diverse groups of people become involved in its study, it will erode the ability of other groups to participate in the conversation. But that's a mistaken idea of what historians can do: if you are interested in history, you can study any aspect of history. You don't have to study only people who look like you, or only people with your politics.

/// If you are interested in history, you can study any aspect of it – you don't have to study only people who look like you ///

BRONWEN EVERILL



Other views of empire One of the founding members of History Reclaimed, Zareer Masani, shared his take on the British empire on our podcast: historyextra.com/masani-pod



Crowds throng the unveiling of the statue of Edward Colston, Bristol, 1895. Many such monuments were erected during periods of national anxiety, long after their subjects had died, says Alan Lester

radar, China was subject to informal British control for a long time.

SS There's also a chapter on the Tasmanian genocide that highlights the way in which historical arguments from people on the right of the political spectrum are growing more extreme. The [19th-century] Tasmanian genocide appears in every survey of British empire I've ever read – in books by Niall Ferguson, Jan Morris and Jeremy Paxman. Ferguson, for instance, describes how "the Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land were hunted down, confined, and ultimately exterminated". He calls it one of the most shocking of all the chapters in the history of the British empire. Similarly, Jan Morris cites the episode as the cruellest illustration of the fact that the empire was about race. But some defenders of empire are now essentially denying it happened, which is a position far beyond what defenders of empire were saying even 20 years ago.

Alan, you argue in the book that, though we can trace the roots of this politicisation back to the 1960s, it has really picked up since the 2008 financial crisis – and that we can link similar upticks to other moments of particular anxiety.

AL What got me thinking about this was the hysteria sparked after the toppling of [slave trader and philanthropist] Edward Colston in a BLM protest in Bristol in 2020. Once you start to look into the statues across

/// We're losing the ability to be nuanced, and to understand that opposite things can be true at the same time ///

SATHNAM SANGHERA

our urban landscape, particularly around Westminster, you realise that many of them were not put up soon after the death of their subjects but during moments of imperial anxiety. Many are late Victorian or early Edwardian, and that was a period in which the British empire was being challenged by new empires such as Germany's, the rise of American economic power, the South African War [with the Boers between 1899 and 1902], and the feeling that the British population was relatively weak and not in a condition to fight that war properly. These anxieties fuelled a renewed determination to celebrate and cling on to what Britain had.

We saw the same thing again when the empire was coming to an end in the 1950s and 60s, when British governments were sending national servicemen to fight in former colonies in Kenya, in Aden, in

Malaya. That was another period in which we see a sudden intellectual resurgence of justifications for empire, when neoliberals came together to justify the British and other European empires. In part it was an attempt to retain the loyalty of former colonies during the emergence of the Cold War, to combat fears of newly independent governments moving off into the Soviet or Chinese spheres and not staying in the western (now US-dominated) sphere.

The balance-sheet approach returned: yes, we were racist, and yes, we did delay independence too long – but we brought you railways, education, civilisation, effective governance, the civil service. And in many ways that's what we're seeing again now.

What would you say to people who don't feel there's anything wrong with their view of empire – that rather than being a result of anxiety, it's a source of pride?

AL I know Sathnam raised issues with the idea of pride and shame earlier, but I'm not necessarily against people feeling pride in their national past. But we do need a more inclusive story, because sometimes that pride translates into pride in a white British national past, when we need to understand the past in all of its complexity.

Britons were always a complicated lot: they were just as argumentative and divisive in the past. When there were slave traders, there were also people arguing against slavery. When settler colonialism was going on, missionaries and humanitarians and others in those colonies were arguing that it was immoral – but there weren't too many saying that we should just allow indigenous peoples to live their own way. Even the most progressive arguments tended to promote colonisation as benefiting those being colonised, bringing them civilisation.

BE Again, history is not one story – it's a sort of negotiation, a debate. What historians do is look at the past from lots of different angles, because there isn't just one narrative.

SS We are losing the ability to be nuanced, and to understand that opposite things can be true at the same time. I feel like that's the way that politics is headed: it's all about simplistic messages. Social media is polarising us. We're ending up in echo chambers because of algorithms and so on. History has no space in that, because history is packed with complications and nuance. **H**



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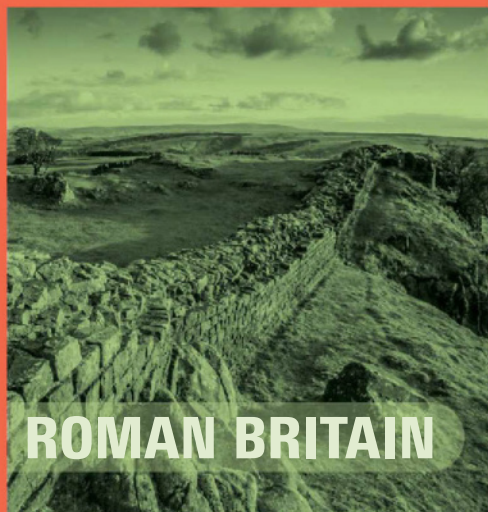
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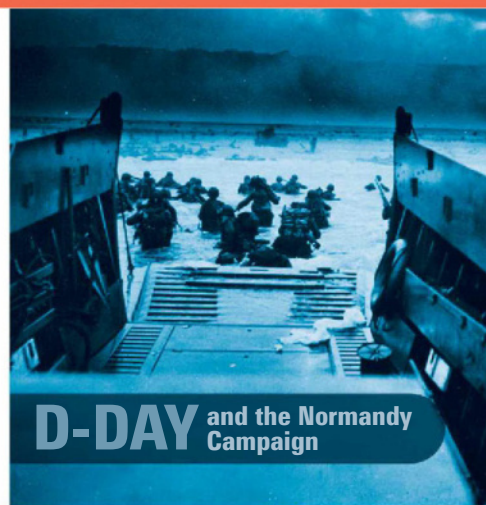
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The history of witchcraft



D-DAY and the Normandy Campaign

BEHIND THE NEWS

The long road back

The election was tough for the Conservatives – but the past holds clues on how parties can return from the brink

BY **RICHARD TOYE**

It's election night 1997, and Jeremy Paxman is grilling Tory grandee Cecil Parkinson. "You're the chairman of a fertiliser firm," the famously pugna-cious broadcaster asked Parkinson. "How deep is the mess you're in?" Twenty-seven years later, as the Conservative party comes to terms with another landslide defeat, it's worth applying the same question to the present day. How does this result compare with previous devastating losses – not only those suffered by the Tories themselves, but also those experienced by the other major parties? And what can history teach us about the tools that politicians use to dig themselves out of the dung heap and set themselves back on the road to power?

First, let us look at how 2024 compares with historical low points experienced by the Conservatives. The Tories won 121 seats on the basis of a 24 per cent vote share. That's better than the more drastic predictions made during the campaign: some thought that the Liberal Democrats might even replace the Conservatives as the official opposition. But even measured against previous Tory disasters, the picture is stark.

In 1906, Arthur Balfour's Conservatives were smashed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's resurgent Liberals, and were reduced to 156 seats. But this was on the basis of a 43.4 per cent share of the vote – a figure out of reach for Rishi Sunak's party.

In 1945, Winston Churchill suffered a shock humiliation at the hands of Clement Attlee's Labour party, securing only 36.2 per cent of votes cast. This translated into 189 seats – a huge drop from the previous election 10 years earlier, yet still enough to put up a credible parliamentary fight against the massed ranks of socialist MPs. In 1997, John Major's party won only 30.7 per cent and 165 seats, with barely any improvement on either measure in the result under William Hague four years later. This shows that there is no automatic guarantee that the Tories will benefit significantly from 'the swing of the pendulum' come 2029.

It's also worth looking at Labour's famous defeats. In 1931, the party was reduced to 52 seats (including a handful of radical Independent Labour Party members). The circumstances were unique, though: Ramsay MacDonald, the prime minister,

had turned on Labour, the party that he had led until recently, and was now heading a National Government coalition dominated by Conservatives. Though rather cold comfort, Labour still won 30.6 per cent of the vote, down 6.5 percentage points on 1929 when it had formed a minority government. The outcome was obviously a calamity, yet the battered party benefited from the fact that the Liberals were now split into factions and definitively eliminated as serious rivals. By contrast, the opposition benches of today's new House of Commons will be occupied by a range of minor-party insurgents competing with a much-reduced Tory contingent to grab the public's attention.

For today's Tories concerned about the impact of the rise of Reform on their prospects, there might be a crumb of comfort in Labour's legendarily poor performance in 1983, when it garnered just 27.6 per cent of the vote share. The Social Democratic Party had recently split from Labour and teamed up with the Liberals, with the combined Alliance winning a total vote share of 25.4 per cent. Yet this won the Alliance forces only 23 seats to Labour's 209 – the price paid



Shock defeat Winston Churchill addresses crowds during his campaign for the 1945 election – which he famously, and resoundingly, lost

under our first-past-the-post system for coming second in many places. Though Labour couldn't return to power for another 14 years, by the 1987 election any fears that the Alliance might establish itself as the second largest party had faded.

Today, the gap between the Conservatives and Reform is much greater than that between Labour and the Alliance 41 years ago, both in terms of vote percentage and seats won. The electoral system in its current form offers the Tories a firewall against a parliamentary breakthrough by Nigel Farage's party. Yet, if Reform continues to eat away at the Tory vote without translating its support into a substantial Commons presence, the result could be to divide the forces of the right and to gift political hegemony to Labour for a generation.

The Conservatives might tell themselves there has been a widespread lack of enthusiasm for Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, and that his party gained its majority on the back of a vote share significantly lower than that it obtained when it lost to Theresa May in 2017. They might also point to the low turnout, and observe that the political volatility of the

Brexit and post-Brexit years might soon turn things in their favour again. Nevertheless, the defining feature of the campaign has been popular hostility to the Tories. History shows that, when a party's brand has been as badly damaged as that of the Conservatives is now, the path towards electability generally takes more than a single term to complete.

Modern politics has its roots in the Great Reform Act of 1832, when a popular revolt against 'the old corruption' yielded an important extension of the franchise and an electoral kick in the teeth for the Tories. Some caution is needed when comparing the era of Wellington and Melbourne with that of Sunak and Starmer, of course. For one thing, there was then no secret ballot; for another, religious questions then played a much more central role in politics.

Still, some lessons can be drawn from the leadership of Sir Robert Peel, who rebranded the Tories as 'the Conservative Party'. A moderniser with a rationalist bent, he brought his party back to office in remarkably short order at a time when the governing

Whigs seemed to hold the important cards. A short-lived minority administration established his governing competence, paving the way for his more substantial ministry of 1841–46. During those years he pushed forward with reforms intended to alleviate economic distress and blunt the appeal of the radical Chartist movement.

Peel had, in some ways, set the pattern for Conservative recoveries later in the 19th century, even when the franchise was extended to include a mass working-class electorate. Peel had cleaved to the centre ground, promising both "the maintenance of order and the cause of good government" and "the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances".

Benjamin Disraeli followed in his footsteps, pioneering a 'One Nation' conservatism with a cross-class appeal. Lord Salisbury (PM for three stints between 1885 and 1902) similarly emphasised crown, constitution and the defence of the union and the Anglican church. At the same time, his governments enacted small-scale reforms to head off the real or imagined threat of revolution. Both Disraeli and Salisbury

Courting voters

Labour leader Michael Foot on the campaign trail in 1983, and (inset)

Lib Dem leader Ed Davey embarks on a 'symbolic stunt' in the run-up to this year's election



// For Tories seeking evidence that it's possible to plot a quick return to power, 1945 is the most encouraging example //

benefited from Liberal divisions and mistakes, as well as from the frustrations that mount when a governing party is seen to have failed to deliver.

That there was no simple formula for getting back to Downing Street was made obvious after the Conservatives' crushing defeat in 1906. Though the Liberal government ran into problems over Ireland, the suffragettes and the unions, the Tories lacked a clear path back to power prior to the outbreak of the First World War. But the turmoil that conflict generated first helped them return to office as part of a coalition, then split the Liberal party to boot.

In 1918, the Conservatives won enough MPs to govern in their own right but stayed in partnership with one of the Liberal

factions under prime minister David Lloyd George for four more years. Thereafter they owed their interwar dominance in part to the newfound independence of the Irish Free State, which meant that Northern Ireland was now the only part of the island returning MPs to Westminster (Irish nationalist MPs had been no friends of the Tories, who vigorously opposed Home Rule).

As 1918 reveals, electoral recovery requires not only the successful exploitation of propitious conditions, but also patience and a fair helping of luck.

For Tories seeking evidence that it is possible to plot a quick return to power, 1945 provides the most encouraging example. After his defeat that year, Churchill stayed on as party leader. Though he was ageing, ill and preoccupied with writing his war memoirs, he still had a lot of prestige, and benefited from friendly media coverage. Wisely, he left policy renewal and party reorganisation to others. The Tories skilfully accepted popular parts of Labour's agenda, such as the new National Health Service, while attacking the continuation of wartime rationing and controls. They suffered another defeat in 1950, but achieved a narrow victory at a further election the following year. This set the scene

for a long and relatively harmonious period in power – though, as the economy faltered towards the end of that stretch, Labour dubbed it “13 years of Tory misrule”. The post-1997 Conservative climb-back will be less inspiring to the modern party's members: it took the Tories 13 years and four new leaders to get back into government.

Finally, though the Tories should examine their own past for clues about how to escape the electoral desert, they should look elsewhere, too. At many times in its history, Labour has proved adept at healing self-inflicted political wounds. It has achieved this through reassuring (and not always charismatic) leadership, policy innovation and slick use of the media. Under Ed Davey, the Lib Dems, too, have bounced back from the catastrophic defeats from 2015 to 2019. They managed this through press-friendly stunts – including bungee jumping and paddleboarding on Lake Windermere – and the disciplined local targeting of limited resources.

The next Tory leader may want to reflect on the legacy of Peel and his successors. He or she may also want to learn lessons from Attlee, Blair, Wilson and Starmer – and then consider renting a paddleboard. **H**

.....
Richard Toye is professor of history at the University of Exeter



MICHAEL WOOD ON... CRAFTING A NEW NATIONAL NARRATIVE

// We need a meaningful story for the new generation – our composite union //

.....
Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series. His latest book is *In the Footsteps of Du Fu* (Simon & Schuster, 2023). You'll find him on X at [MichaelWoodMV](#)

B B C

WHAT A SUMMER IT'S BEEN SO FAR, WITH AN astonishing election result. There has been much talk of national renewal, and in due course we'll see what that means. But it felt like a watershed. The new prime minister's dad was a toolmaker, his mum a nurse; the cabinet is majority comprehensive-educated, with more alumni of Parris Wood High School than of Eton. Among commentators – not just on the left – there's been a growing feeling that 14 years of Tory rule, compounded by Brexit, have undermined what the great medieval historian Ibn Khaldun called *asabiyyah*: group feeling – the glue that makes societies work. And watching TV on election night, I found myself wondering whether, like sediment settling in a glass, the time has finally arrived for a new national narrative.

One hundred years ago, the British empire reached its apogee. It was a world, as depicted in popular culture, orchestrated by Elgar and redolent with the scent of saddle soap and railway smoke. As Jan Morris memorably put it in the *Pax Britannica* trilogy: a world of P&O liners rolling down to Rio, of "dominion over palm and pine", of an empire on which the sun never set. It is amazing to think that our oldest fellow citizens today were alive then.

What changes they have seen over the span of a single lifetime. World war, imperial decline, the election of '45 and the birth of the welfare state. Wilson's recovery in the Swinging Sixties, then the Thatcher era that saw Britain's de-industrialisation. Blair's Cool Britannia orchestrated by cocky Oasis optimism – till, fatefully, Iraq ushered us into the past quarter century to Brexit and beyond, with its starkly divided narratives of Britain.

That's a very simplistic sketch, I know. But it seems to me that certain ideas of national identity continue to have a massive influence on us: on our vocabularies of nationhood, our understanding of the world and our place in it.

It's nearly 30 years since the British flags were lowered in Hong Kong, signalling the end of the empire. Yet the narrative still grips us. Look at the plethora of Churchill films released around the time of Brexit: *Darkest Hour*, *Churchill*, *Dunkirk*. To be sure, these were great and often heroic events. My dad, injured on D-Day, was treated at Haslar Naval Hospital in Portsmouth; Uncle Syd was torpedoed and sunk off Tobruk; Uncle Bill saw Dunkirk, D-Day and the march to Berlin. My postwar generation grew up with all that, and also with the idea that we were good and right – that we were different.

My parents, aunts and uncles were good folk – hard-working, deferential little people who believed in that story. But they served a vast imperial project whose lineaments and oppressions are being laid out now by a new generation of historians and writers. All empires are based on exploitation and violence: we waged war in every corner of the Earth. It is staggering to think, for example, that the enormous financial compensation for slavery fixed in 1837 was not paid off till 2015 – paid to the descendants of the owners, not those of the enslaved.

Of course, there are still those willing to prop up people's sense of themselves with a tissue of myth and racial prejudice. But the time is surely now finally up for the old narrative. We need a meaningful story for the new generation – for our composite union in which all Britons, of whatever origin, recognise themselves. Fundamental to this is the meaning of history: how it sustains and defines us, and how to build that sense in a fragmenting world for a new, inclusive vision of our history.

What should sit at the heart of a new narrative? The British empire has been the greatest influence on our history over the past three centuries. It shaped us all, whether our ancestors came from Govan, St Kitts or Bangladesh, from Bodmin, Halesowen, Cardiff or Belfast, our identities remade as Britons to go out to the world.

Now, for the first time, arguably, we have a government that reflects British society: 92 per cent comprehensive-educated, close to gender-equal, with a black foreign secretary and a female chancellor. It has taken 200 years since a demonstration for reform was crushed at Peterloo, almost 100 since the expansion of the franchise to include all women, and 80 since that transformative election of 1945. Not long, then.

Democracy, as we are often reminded, depends on the *informed* consent of the governed. In that, history has a crucial role to play. And history, after all, is written by us. All of us. **H**





HIDDEN HISTORIES

KAVITA PURI on why we should celebrate diverse histories year round

// I wish that there was no need for specialist history months //

Kavita Puri

is a journalist and broadcaster for BBC Radio 4. Her latest BBC Sounds podcast, *Three Million*, charts the 1943 Bengal Famine. She is also author of *Partition Voices: Untold British Stories* (Bloomsbury, 2019)



THIS ISSUE IS PUBLISHED AT THE MIDPOINT OF South Asian Heritage Month (SAHM) – which, incredibly, is only in its fourth edition. I well remember its inception. In 2017, the TV documentary *My Family, Partition and Me* aired on BBC One. One of its strands followed SAHM co-founder Binita Kane as she retraced the journey taken by her father, Bim Bhowmick, from East Pakistan – now Bangladesh – to India in 1947. It was a deeply affecting programme, and a transformative moment for her.

Binita had grown up in Wales and had previously known little of her father's history – the story of his migration across a border, but also of the devastating loss of family members during the partition of British India. After participating in that programme, she made it her mission (alongside her day job as a doctor) to make sure that no one else ever felt cheated of their history. I've watched how, in a short space of time since its launch, SAHM has gained momentum, its reach expanding from museums to blue-chip companies and media organisations as staff hold sessions on British south Asian history and culture.

It is long overdue. First marked in 1987, UK Black History Month is now well established, particularly in schools. That is not the case for SAHM. It's not helped

by the fact that the designated month runs from mid-July to mid-August – timed to coincide with the anniversary of India's independence from British colonial rule on 15 August 1947, and the creation of India and Pakistan, but outside the school term.

The 2021 census revealed that British Asians are the largest ethnic minority group in Britain. Yet we are only now starting to understand British south Asian history more widely, let alone its complex nature. Rather than one homogeneous subject, it encompasses various south Asian countries, regional histories and socio-economic factors affecting different populations in Britain in different ways over the years.

South Asians have had a presence in the UK since as early as 1600. Rozina Visram's seminal 2002 book *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* tells this longer history, beginning with the early settlers brought to Britain as employees of the East India Company, which was granted a royal charter by Elizabeth I. The first arrivals were mostly servants but also lascars – seamen who came to ports such as Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool and London.

Exploring these histories is important. I wish, though, that there were no need for 'months'. It would be better if British black and south Asian history simply became part of talking about British history. So, when learning about the suffragette movement, we would hear about the significant contribution of Sophia Duleep Singh (1876–1948). When teaching working-class history, we would share the story of Shapurji Saklatvala, MP for Battersea, who spoke out passionately on behalf of those living in poverty in the interwar years. And when exploring Second World War history we would encounter the story of Noor Inayat Khan, who was sent from London to work as a secret agent with the French resistance before being captured by the Gestapo and executed in September 1944. These are part of wider British history, not only British south Asian history.

On her mantelpiece in Manchester, Binita Kane keeps a vial containing soil from east Bengal, where her father was born as a subject of the Raj. He later migrated to Britain, where he worked for many decades as a doctor in the NHS. His story embodies the point that the history of Britain and south Asia is long and intertwined. It is time we better understood this shared history, not least because it helps us comprehend contemporary Britain. And it would be nice if this focus wasn't limited to just one month each year. **H**



Crowds gather in New Delhi on 15 August 1947, the day India gained independence from British colonial rule – and was partitioned into two countries, sparking mass migration that brought many people to the UK



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LETTERS



Crusaders should not be viewed by modern standards, argues reader Kevin J Last

LETTER OF THE MONTH

When not in Rome...

In his very interesting article *Five Things You (Probably) Didn't Know About Roman Britain* (July), Rob Collins omits questioning who the Romans were. The 'Romans' came not from Rome, but from the whole Roman empire, which encircled the Mediterranean – and all these 'Romans' are among our ancestors! Some 'Roman' Africans were soldiers (including officers), while others were sailors, bureaucrats and traders. African auxiliary troops were often used as frontier guards – for example, the Numerus Maurorum Aurelianorum stationed by Hadrian's Wall.

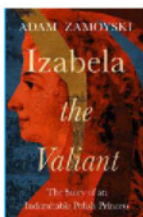
Quite a number of soldiers (from many regiments) settled here when discharged, and other Romans remained when the empire ended. They married local women, or just begat children.

There was no racial discrimination in the Roman empire. Among our African visitors was one of the four Roman African emperors, Septimius Severus, who died in York in 211. His Syrian wife, Julia Domna, and their sons had arrived with, and worked for, him. There were also a number of African governors of Britain – Quintus Lollius Urbicus, for example.

Marika Sherwood, Kent



Septimius Severus with his family in a c200 AD painting. 'Roman' people came from a wide geographical area, says Marika Sherwood



We reward the Letter of the Month writer with a copy of a new book. This issue, that's *Izabela the Valiant: The Story of an Indomitable Polish Princess* by Adam Zamoyski. Read our review on page 74

Fighting the slave trade

I commend Mary Wills's well-researched article *Britain's War on the Slave Ships* (July), which brought a more balanced view to our attitude to slavery. So much of the writing about the slave trade has judged the past according to present-day views, when in fact just a few years later Britain had set about abolishing slavery. The article concentrates on the west Africa slave trade, and although the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trades are also mentioned, these were important too.

The Indian Ocean trade was centred on Zanzibar and carried out by Omani (Manga) Arabs, mainly through Muscat, to supply enslaved people to the Middle East. It was through the actions of Sir John Kirk as consul general, bringing pressure to bear on Sultan Barghash, and an East African Royal Navy squadron – similar to what had been effective in West Africa – that the Indian Ocean slave trade was brought to an end in 1878.

Some distance off the coast of Zanzibar is 'Grave Island', where sailors killed in fighting the slave trade were buried.

Roger Webber, Argyll

An overlooked role

In the otherwise excellent piece on the role played by the British navy in limiting the slave trade from Africa, there is one questionable statement: that many recaptured slaves were not repatriated, but were instead relocated to Sierra Leone. At this time, African tribal chiefs controlled the supply of enslaved people, and European slave traders were not allowed into the interior of Africa. This meant the 'recaptives' could only have been returned to the port from which they had been shipped, or another slave-trading port, where they would undoubtedly have been re-enslaved by African traders and sold again. Where else could they go?

The active role of Africans in the slave trade is currently minimised but needs to be remembered.

Dr Kathleen Chater, author of *Untold Histories: Black People in England and Wales During the Period of the British Slave Trade*, London

Out of time

I enjoyed aspects of Steve Tibble's account of the crusades and the dire behaviour, which went against chivalric standards. However, I do not agree with all the principal reasons given for the alleged criminal behaviour. The "surprisingly modern factors" Tibble refers to are at least partly unjustified and not at all modern. For "male entitlement",



read a patriarchal society – which, as we know, held good until well into Victorian times and, in some cases, beyond. "Climate change" is too much of a stretch and would be better replaced by 'climate instability'.

Attempts to apply modern concepts to the past should be handled with care and often tend to weaken, not strengthen, the argument.

Kevin J Last, Somerset

Fake news

It's not just polls before an election that can misjudge the public mood (*Conversation*, August). On 3 November 1948, one day after the US presidential election, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* printed the headline 'Dewey Defeats Truman'. The newspaper was so sure that Truman was facing a landslide defeat by



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► Page 38



Harry Truman with an erroneous report of his defeat in the 1948 US election. Reader Ian MacDonald cites the story as a key misjudgment of public mood

his Republican rival, Governor Dewey of New York, that it went to press before many states had reported their results. It was proven wrong: Truman was victorious and thousands of copies of the story were printed before the error could be corrected.

Ian MacDonald, Essex

High praise

I'd like to compliment Saul David on his article [on D-Day's airborne assault] in the June issue. In my youth, I served as a paratrooper in the US Army. My four years of service included a year-long tour of duty with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam in 1966. Needless to say, I'm always quite interested in the history of airborne troops.

Saul's article nicely covers the actions of Major Howard on D-Day and Major Frost at Dieppe and Arnhem – but also gives us a real treat by covering airborne exploits not as well-known in the States, including Italy, Norway and the crossing of the Rhine.

Well done! You made an old man happy today.

Charles Shay, New York

Before the gold rush

Your feature on the 1900 Paris Olympics (August) claims that Charlotte Cooper was the first woman to win an individual Olympic gold. In fact, gold medals weren't awarded until 1904, and Cooper would have been awarded a rectangular silver medal for coming first. (Winners in some sports received silver-gilt medals, but not in tennis.) However, the records were adjusted in 1904, when she was retrospectively declared a gold-medal winner.

John Westbrooke, London



A c1904 postcard of tennis player Charlotte Cooper. Reader John Westbrooke points out that Cooper would not have been awarded Olympic gold – despite coming first in her sport

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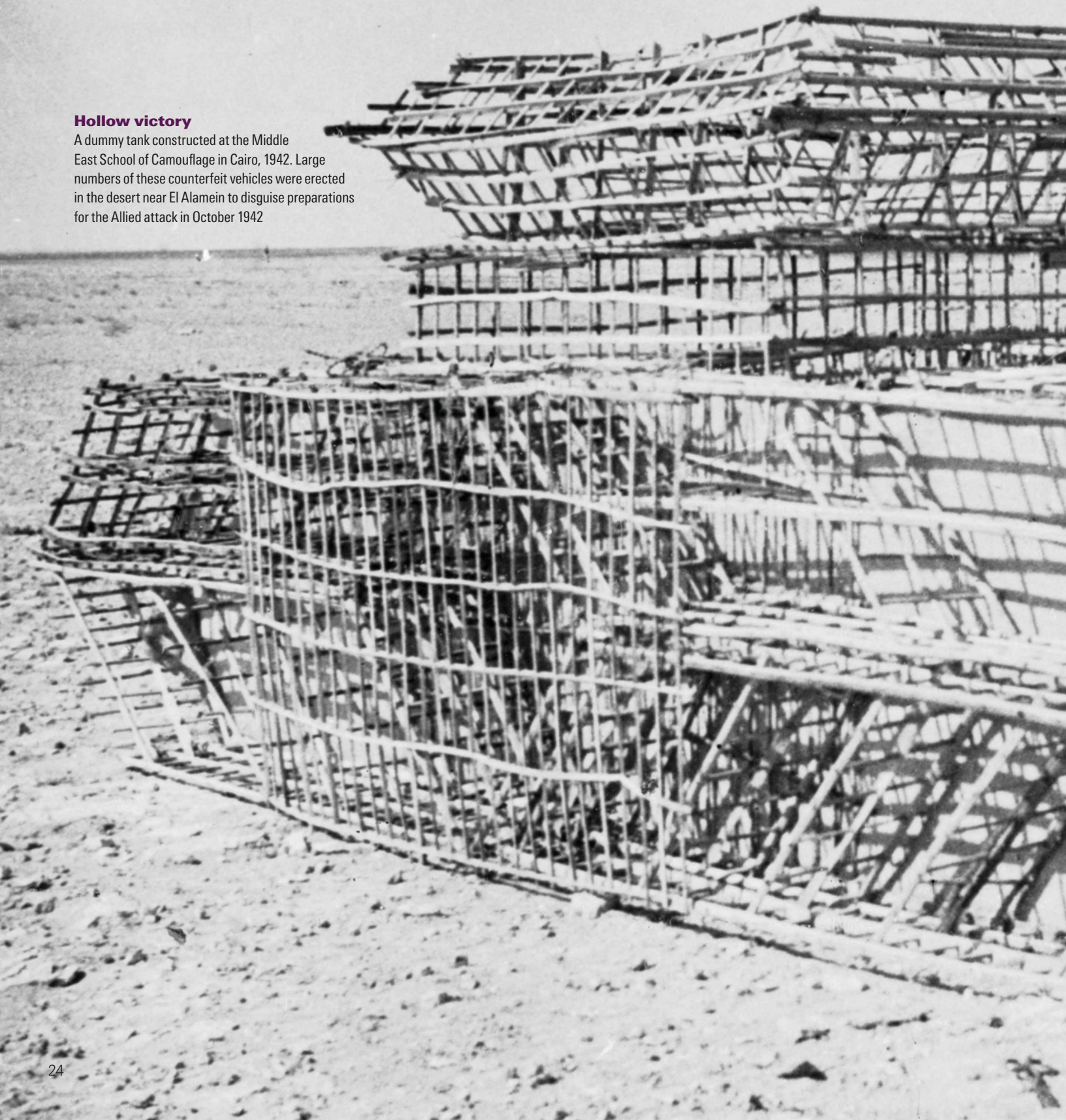
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THE SPY WHO HOO

Hollow victory

A dummy tank constructed at the Middle East School of Camouflage in Cairo, 1942. Large numbers of these counterfeit vehicles were erected in the desert near El Alamein to disguise preparations for the Allied attack in October 1942



ODDWINKED HITLER

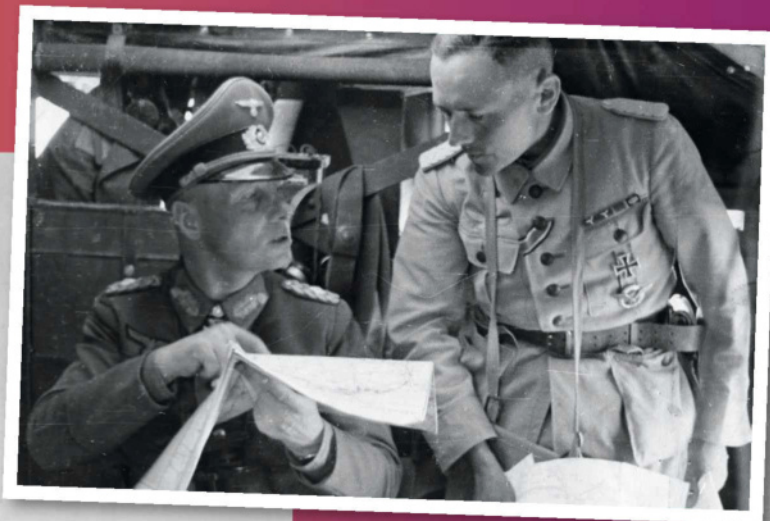
Dummy tanks at El Alamein. Bogus generals in Algiers. Sham armies on D-Day. All were ruses masterminded by Dudley Clarke. **Robert Hutton** tells the story of the British soldier who made an art form of duping the Nazis

Dudley Clarke spent his career in military service, but found his métier devising schemes to deceive enemy forces



Eye in the sky

A German Fieseler Fi 156 Storch aircraft deployed in north Africa in 1941, used for reconnaissance. Aware of such aerial intelligence-gathering, British forces used it to their advantage, creating fake pipelines and supply dumps to direct Axis attention to the wrong areas of the desert



Enemy outfoxed

German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, pictured, left, in 1941. Lulled into a false sense of security by Clarke's deceptions, the 'Desert Fox' had returned to Europe to recuperate when the Allies launched their attack at El Alamein



Hans-Otto Behrendt stared at the map in front of him and tried to think, despite the fierce Egyptian heat. A few miles to the east, 100,000 of his fellow German and Italian soldiers were waiting in the desert, facing almost twice as many Allied troops. The opposing armies were stretched out in parallel lines about 40 miles long, running from the Mediterranean coast in the north down to the Qattara Depression in the south, impassable to vehicles.

It was only a matter of time, Behrendt knew, before those Allied troops launched their attack. As intelligence officer to the German commander, Erwin Rommel, it was his job to work out when it would come – and where.

The date was 23 October 1942. For the previous two years, Axis and Allied forces had pursued each other back and forth across north Africa. At one time or another, each side had thought it was on the point of victory – only for the tide to turn. A few months earlier, Behrendt had believed he might be about to witness the capture of

The German officer poring over photographs and maps had been watching a magic trick – the greatest the world had seen

Egypt. Axis forces had been barely a day away from Cairo, where panicking British soldiers and officials had been preparing to fight to the death or flee, piling civilians onto trains and burning vast tranches of secret documents. But, after months of retreats, the Allied armies had somehow held out. And Axis forces, short of fuel and ammunition – short of everything, in fact – had been unable to strike the decisive blow.

Now it was the turn of the enemy to push for victory. Troops from across the British empire had dug into the sand, waiting for their new commander, Bernard Montgomery, to give the word.

Behrendt was surprised they had waited so long. His commander agreed: "If I were Montgomery, we would not be here any more," Rommel had remarked to him. The one comfort the young intelligence officer could take was that there was no way that anyone could launch a surprise attack in the desert. When the Allies came, he would know about it. Confident in his forces' intelligence, Rommel had returned to Europe to recuperate from the strain of desert warfare. He would be summoned when he was needed.



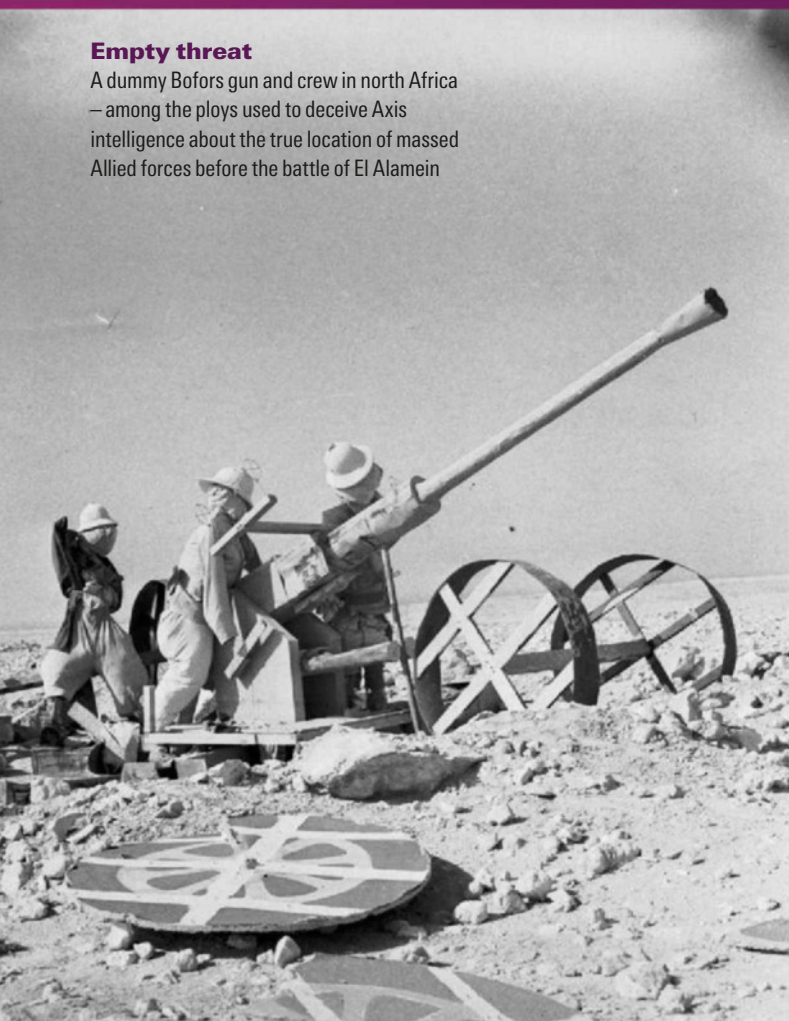
How El Alamein was won

James Holland tells the story of the battle on our podcast: historyextra.com/el-alamein-pod



Empty threat

A dummy Bofors gun and crew in north Africa – among the ploys used to deceive Axis intelligence about the true location of massed Allied forces before the battle of El Alamein



Surprise attack

British tanks on the advance during the second battle of El Alamein. The campaign of misinformation and deception plotted by Dudley Clarke played a key role in Allied victory in this clash, which turned the tide of the war in north Africa

Examining the reconnaissance photos, Behrendt was convinced that the Allies weren't in any hurry. They were constructing some kind of pipeline towards the southern end of their line, probably to carry water, which was barely halfway completed. There were supply dumps appearing in the south as well – always a telltale clue about where an attack would come. True, a large number of trucks were parked at the northern end of the line, about 25 miles back from the front, but they hadn't moved for weeks.

Farther back was an armoured brigade that had appeared a few days earlier, still well to the rear. That would surely be part of Montgomery's assault force, but it wasn't yet in place. Behrendt would keep an eye on that brigade, certainly, but it looked as if the attack was going to be in the south – and, it seemed, wasn't imminent. The general report for the day was brief: "Enemy situation unchanged. Quiet all day along the front."

That evening, at 9.40pm, the British artillery opened fire with a barrage heavier than anything yet seen in the desert war: around 1,000 guns firing right along the length of the front. It was so loud and relentless that even

some of those firing the guns panicked. To those on the receiving end, it was sheer hell – an endless rain of high explosive.

The second battle of El Alamein – a clash that would transform Allied fortunes in the desert war – was under way. Not that the Germans knew it.

Unexpected assault

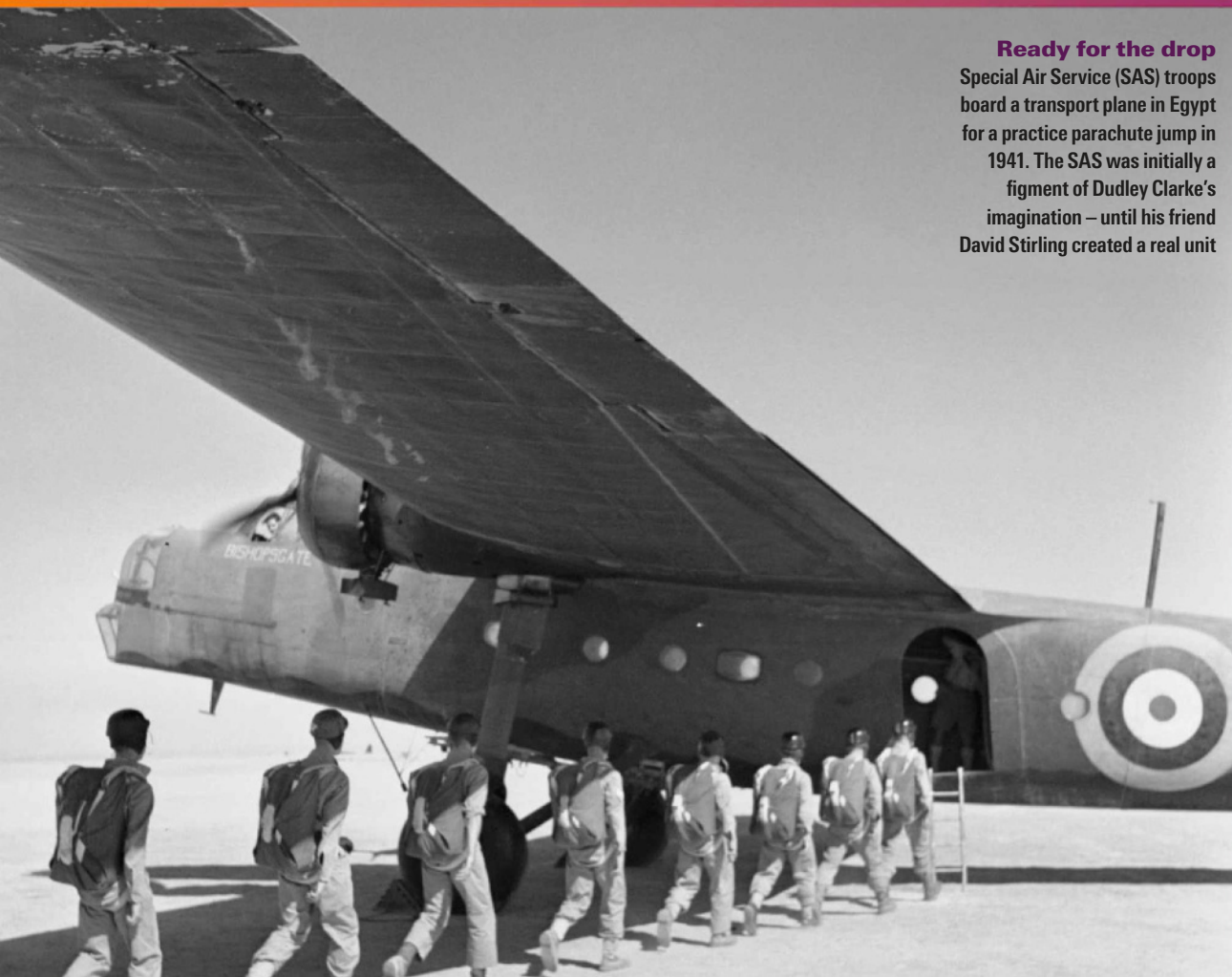
At headquarters, Behrendt and his fellow officers tried to work out what was happening. Communications from the frontline were confused and sporadic. Hundreds of tanks and thousands of troops were advancing. It was clear that the attack had been launched – but where was the main blow going to fall? And how, Behrendt wondered, had the Allies managed to launch a surprise attack in a desert that didn't offer enough cover to hide a platoon, let alone whole divisions?

What Behrendt couldn't have guessed is that, as he'd sat poring over photographs and maps, reading reports from forward observers, he'd been watching a magic trick – the greatest the world had ever seen. That pipeline he'd noted? It was a dummy, made of petrol cans hammered flat. The supply dumps

nearby? Dyed bits of hessian, flat on the ground, designed to look authentic in aerial photographs. Both of these stunts had been staged to catch his eye. And that wasn't all.

The parked trucks farther north that he'd dismissed were in fact carefully designed stage props, codenamed 'Sunshields': frames made out of cloth and steel sitting on top of barrels. During the nights before the attack, an entire armoured corps had crept forward, unit by unit, and secured the frames on top of their tanks so that they looked like trucks. In the place where they had been waiting, other teams assembled dummy tanks to replace the real vehicles that had advanced. So when the sun came up each morning, it seemed to Axis observers that those tanks had never moved.

A magician calls the chat they use to distract and mislead their audience 'patter'. In the north African desert, that 'patter' had taken the form of false intelligence whispers suggesting that no attack was imminent. A conference for senior generals had been organised in Tehran. Officers on the front line had sent telegrams back to Cairo, booking hotel rooms. A double agent in the city had reported that it was full of soldiers on leave.



Ready for the drop
Special Air Service (SAS) troops board a transport plane in Egypt for a practice parachute jump in 1941. The SAS was initially a figment of Dudley Clarke's imagination – until his friend David Stirling created a real unit



This magic trick had been carefully designed to put Behrendt at his ease and focus his attention in the wrong place in the days before the battle at El Alamein. But what almost no one, even among the Allies, fully grasped was that it was merely a single trick in a vast global illusion show that had already been running for more than a year and would last the rest of the war. And it had all emerged from the mind of one very unusual man.

If you've heard of Dudley Clarke, it's probably because of the BBC drama *SAS: Rogue Heroes*, in which Dominic West played him as a louche, cross-dressing spy, lounging round his Cairo office in a Chanel gown. For most of the past 80 years, Clarke has been an obscure, largely forgotten character. Occasionally he would pop up in the memoirs of more famous people: a mysterious figure in a camel-hair coat, on the fringes of important events, doing a job that no one quite understood. But the few who did understand his role were under no illusions.

"He is irreplaceable," wrote General Harold Alexander in 1943, when he was commanding Allied forces in north Africa. Clarke had, he thought, "contributed more to

the successful operations in the Middle East than probably any other officer of his rank".

That was quite a claim, and it leads to an obvious question: what actually was it that Clarke had done?

From soldier to spy

Born in 1899, Clarke had joined the army during the First World War so, by the time the Second World War began, he had been in uniform for most of his life. He'd served in the artillery and the Royal Flying Corps, but had found his niche as an aide to generals. He was the man to whom you gave unusual assignments – an original thinker who, if he sometimes seemed on the verge of insubordination, could be relied upon to solve problems you hadn't yet considered.

When it was feared that the Nazis might invade Ireland in 1940, it was Clarke who was sent, in absolute secrecy, to liaise with Dublin. In the days after the evacuation of Dunkirk, Clarke was one of the driving forces behind the idea of creating small independent fighting units that could strike behind enemy lines and then disappear. He even came up with a name for them: Commandos.

Towards the end of 1940, Clarke was summoned to Cairo, where he was asked to turn his mind to deceiving the enemy. He started out small, inventing fake units here and there: the first was an imaginary parachute unit that he'd christened the Special Air Service (SAS).

The story of the SAS began in early 1941, when Clarke was handed an extract from the diary of a captured Italian officer, which showed that, months earlier, Italian forces had been warned that British paratroopers were operating in their area. In fact, as Clarke knew better than most, the British had only just formed their first parachute unit back in England. But if the enemy was worried about something, he could play on that fear.

So Clarke set about imagining his ideal parachute unit. It would be equipped with the best kit – for a while, he even considered giving it helicopters. The unit was now – according to his myth – training in the Transjordan desert: far enough away to be hard to check, but close enough to be threatening.

Clarke began spreading rumours about the unit's existence, even dressing up two soldiers as airborne troops and sending them round Cairo to be noticed by people who



Fake flyers British troopers Smith and Gurmin in Cairo in 1941. Wearing uniforms with parachute badges, they propagated the myth of the existence of a Special Air Service – long before it was created



Unexpected assault US troops land at Omaha Beach on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Intelligence operatives trained by Clarke persuaded Allied commanders to use his misinformation techniques to convince the Germans that the Allied assault would target the Pas-de-Calais, not Normandy

By the end of the war, the Allies had created 160 false units, including a fake army group and an entire fake carrier fleet

might pass gossip to the enemy. This imaginary unit would be called, he decided, the 1st Special Air Service Battalion.

A few months later, Clarke was visiting his friend David Stirling in hospital, where the latter was recovering after a parachute jump had gone wrong. They discussed Clarke's vision of the Commandos as a small, independent raiding force, and Stirling outlined his own plan to form a similar unit. He asked for Clarke's support, and got it – on one condition. It would be helpful, Clarke said, if Stirling's unit was called the Special Air Service, to put flesh on the bones of the deception he was already running. As an additional touch, he suggested calling the first recruits 'L Detachment', implying the existence of detachments A to K. A legend was about to be born.

Gaming the numbers

Over the course of 1941, the British situation in the Middle East grew more desperate – and Clarke grew more ambitious. Keen to persuade the Germans that the defending force on Cyprus was stronger than it actually was, he asked London to announce that the commanding officer, previously a brigadier, was

now a major-general. The Germans knew that a major-general usually commanded a division – four times the number of troops stationed on the island – and Clarke hoped they would thus conclude that this was how many soldiers were stationed on Cyprus.

To Clarke, such battle deception – inflating German estimates of the size of Allied forces around the world – was “the basis of everything” he achieved. It was this *modus operandi* that later made it possible to persuade the enemy that, even after D-Day, the Allies had forces ready to invade Calais and Norway. It involved years of painstaking work involving false names for units, dummy equipment and misleading communications. By the end of the war, the Allies had created 160 false units, including a fake army group and an entire fake carrier fleet. And his efforts clearly worked: one captured enemy general expressed bafflement that the Allies had yet to throw these forces into the fight.

Like any good magician, Clarke used a variety of techniques. His team, the enigmatically named 'A Force', planted stories in newspapers, built dummy tanks and aircraft for reconnaissance planes to photograph, left

THE FOG OF WAR

Four of Dudley Clarke's greatest deceptions

DOUBLE TROUBLE FOR THE NAZIS

In 1941, Renato Levi (inset left) – an Italian Jew who had been recruited to spy for the Germans – arrived in Cairo. What his masters didn't know was that he was a double agent working for the British. Returning to his German controllers a few months later, he told them that he'd left in Egypt a recruit who would communicate with them by radio. This recruit was entirely fictional; instead, a British wireless operator was sending signals drafted by Clarke's team. Codenamed 'Cheese', Clarke's ruse became the longest-running double agent operation of the war, assisting in deceptions from 1941 until after D-Day.



MAKING A DUMMY OF ROMMEL

In early 1942, as German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel advanced across the desert, Clarke was asked to slow down the enemy commander. Clarke wanted to suggest that the Allies were far stronger than they were – but, not only were they running low on real tanks, they were even running out of dummies. However, Clarke knew that the Germans hid their tanks under Bedouin tents – so he set up tents of his own, and put one of the few remaining dummies under one of them, its barrel pointing out a little way. The Allies knew they'd fooled the enemy when the Luftwaffe bombed the fake camp.



British soldiers build a dummy tank. These were deployed to fool German intelligence into thinking British forces were stronger than they actually were



Allied troops unload supplies during the invasion of Sicily in 1943. Clarke's team diverted Axis attention to Greece and Sardinia

MINCEMEAT'S BIG BROTHER

The most famous part of the 1943 plot to divert Axis attention away from Allied plans to invade Sicily was Operation Mincemeat: fake plans were planted on a corpse that was then set adrift off the Spanish coast for the Germans to pick up. But this was just one element of a much larger deception plan: Operation Barclay. This involved a team led by Clarke spreading rumours and leaving clues that there would be invasions of both Greece and Sardinia, but not Sicily. It was thanks to Clarke's work inflating German estimates of Allied forces that Nazi intelligence believed such a two-pronged assault was possible. Meanwhile, Commando operations against targets in Greece made an attack there seem imminent.



Actor ME Clifton James, who was recruited to pose as General Bernard Montgomery and drop false clues about Allied invasion schemes within earshot of German spies

THE FOOL MONTY

Watching a film in early 1944, Clarke noticed that one of the actors bore a striking resemblance to British General Bernard Montgomery – and was inspired. At the time, the deceivers wanted to mislead the enemy about the timing of the invasion of France. Clarke proposed that a false Monty should be seen somewhere far from England in the days before the planned assault. So for Operation Copperhead, immortalised in the film *I Was Monty's Double*, another actor, ME Clifton James, pretended to be the general – and dropped false hints within earshot of German spies in Gibraltar and Algiers.

The team ran double agents around the Mediterranean, feeding false narratives back to the enemy

false documents across the Middle East and Turkey in the hope that they would be passed to enemy agents, and ran a network of double agents around the Mediterranean feeding false narratives back to the enemy.

By September 1941, Clarke felt that he was getting to grips with the methods and possibilities of deception; now he wanted to put them to work at scale. Sitting in Cairo, he had conceived an idea that was breathtaking in its ambition, and headed to London to make his pitch to the men running Britain's war. They'd got wind of what he'd been up to, and wanted to hear more – but they couldn't have guessed what Clarke was going to propose.

First, he talked them through his methods. Never give the enemy the whole story in one go, he declared; instead, pass him snippets of information and let him work out how it fitted together. "The enemy must be left to build up a jigsaw puzzle himself," Clarke explained. If an intelligence officer thought he had worked something out for himself, he was much more likely to believe in it.

Then he told them his idea. Rather than deploy piecemeal deceptions ahead of individual battles, the Allies should coordinate their misleading work. "All lies, however big, must themselves form pieces in one grand jigsaw puzzle," he concluded. "The basis of all future deception should be a completely bogus plan for winning the war."

Distract and deceive

Deception is, of course, as old as warfare – it's in the myth of the Trojan Horse. But what Clarke was describing was something quite new. It was not simply a question of whether an attack was going to come on the left flank or the right, but whether it would come in Norway or France, through Italy or via the Balkans. This had never before been a possibility, because war had never previously been



Dress code Dudley Clarke, wearing women's clothing and in more traditional male attire. In 1941, he was arrested in Madrid dressed as a woman – whether for personal or professional purposes is still unknown

fought on such a scale. That scale created new opportunities. Soldiers in a trench can quickly move to respond when an attack comes in an unexpected spot nearby. But armies stationed in the wrong country are useless.

The generals, weary of defeat after two years of setbacks, agreed to set up an overarching deception organisation to match the one Clarke had created in Egypt. This became the London Controlling Section, and it ran the D-Day deceptions.

At this moment of personal triumph, though, Clarke was about to do something that would put everything he'd built at risk. A week after he left London to return to Cairo, he was arrested in Madrid – dressed

"down to a brassiere, as a woman".

It was a terrible moment. In October 1941, sitting in a police cell in Franco-led Spain, Clarke probably knew more about British intelligence operations than anyone else outside London. If German intelligence had thought to grab him, an interrogator might have learned crucial facts. Fortunately for him and for the Allies, that didn't happen.

The reasons for this escapade have never been explained. Probably, as both the Spaniards and the British suspected, Clarke had done it simply because he enjoyed dressing as a woman. But files at the National Archives in Kew offer intriguing hints that it might have been part of an effort to recruit a German intelligence officer to pass false information back to Berlin. It may even have been thanks to German intelligence that Clarke was set free: the Axis spies seem to have believed that he was ready to work for them, so the Germans may have pushed for his release. In any case, he was swiftly whisked to Gibraltar.

For a while, it looked as if Clarke's war might be over, but his commanders rated him so highly that they fought to get him back to work. That effort was to be vindicated: subsequent deception successes prior to assaults at El Alamein in 1942 and in Sicily in 1943 (see box) meant there was little difficulty persuading the people running the war that D-Day should get the same treatment. The efforts to persuade the Germans that the Allies would land at Calais are now well known, but what's less appreciated is that they were drawn up by men trained by Clarke, using techniques he'd perfected in the Middle East.

After the war, Clarke retreated into obscurity. For a while he worked in opinion polling for the Conservative party. He penned a novel, a history and a memoir, but was forbidden from writing about his work in Cairo. The result was that, whereas some parts of Britain's deception war became well known, the full scale of it – which very few people grasped even at the time – was rarely understood.

When Clarke died in 1974, *The Times'* obituary ran to no more than two paragraphs. The man who'd pulled off the biggest magic trick in history had been so successful that almost no one realised what he'd done. **H**

Robert Hutton is an author and freelance journalist. His latest book, *The Illusionist: The True Story of the Man Who Fooled Hitler*, was published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in April



Watch the BBC One historical drama **SAS: Rogue Heroes**, which features Dudley Clarke, on iPlayer: bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0d5z0xy



The king they couldn't kill

Want to know why Henry VII is remembered as an intensely suspicious king, wracked by paranoia? The answer, writes **Nathen Amin**, lies in his death-defying rise to power



Portraits of Henry VII typically share a few key traits. They depict a man with a lean, strong face, a shock of brown hair escaping from beneath a black cap. A long nose; often the ghost of a smile. And dark, piercing eyes. Watchful? Wary? Suspicious, even? Certainly that's how history has remembered him: as a king driven to the edge of tyranny by his rampant paranoia, cursed with a debilitating suspicion of those around him that left him isolated and unloved towards the end of his reign.

Francis Bacon, writing in the early 17th century, remarked that Henry was "a dark prince, and infinitely suspicious", who would admit no one "to his power or to his secrets". There is an element of truth in Bacon's judgment that Henry became "lost in a wood of suspicions".

Henry's wary nature is typically attributed to his shaky claim to the throne. The first Tudor monarch was unable to escape the taunt that he was a usurper with no right to call himself king. In fact, his renowned paranoia was the inevitable consequence of a traumatic youth – a trait ingrained long before he harboured ambitions to wear a crown. If we delve deeper into Henry's background, we can draw a fuller picture of one of our most circumspect of monarchs – one that might elicit sympathy for a long misunderstood king.

Living with the enemy

Henry was not born to rule. Indeed, he was born far from the throne, both figuratively and literally. The son of Margaret Beaufort, an English heiress of royal descent, and a half-Welsh, half-French earl named Edmund Tudor, Henry was born in Pembroke Castle on 28 January 1457. It was an inopportune moment to arrive in the world: civil war was brewing between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, remembered today as the Wars of the Roses. And Henry was related on both sides of his family tree to the beleaguered Lancastrian king Henry VI, who was both his maternal cousin and his paternal half-uncle.

He never knew his father, Edmund Tudor, who died three months before Henry was born. Edmund, who had been engaged in conflict with a Yorkist faction led by William Herbert, perished in uncertain circumstances in Carmarthen in November 1456, having not long been released from a Yorkist prison. In any case, Margaret was just 13 years old when she gave birth to Henry, and the baby's welfare was entrusted to his uncle Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke.

A series of battles between 1459 and 1461 ultimately displaced the Lancastrians from



Family ties A 16th-century portrait of Henry VII, and a stained-glass window in Cardiff Castle depicting his uncle, Jasper Tudor, who accompanied the would-be king during his long exile



the English throne. Henry's grandfather, Owen Tudor, was executed and his uncle Jasper was forced into penurious exile. At just four years old, Henry's wardship was sold by the new Yorkist king, Edward IV, to none other than Herbert, the avowed enemy of the Tudors, who had been closely implicated in the death of the boy's father, Edmund, just five years earlier.

Being just a child, Henry had no input in this decision. He spent the next decade living with the Herberts at Raglan Castle in Monmouthshire, on the Welsh border. There he enjoyed a stable life and a solid education. War, however, continued to rear its ugly head.

At the battle of Edgcote in July 1469, Lord Herbert fought rebels loyal to Edward IV's wayward brother George, Duke of Clarence, and cousin Richard Neville, better known as Warwick 'the Kingmaker'. Herbert, whose side lost the battle, was captured and beheaded. It is possible Henry was himself present at this engagement; if so, it would have been a horrifying first experience of warfare. When Clarence and Warwick helped restore the Lancastrian king Henry VI to the throne the following year, though, the door was opened for the young Henry Tudor to be reunited with Jasper, the uncle he barely knew.

This Lancastrian resurgence proved short-lived. In May 1471, Edward IV wrested back his crown in battle then, over the days that followed, ruthlessly eliminated the flower of Lancaster. Among the dead were Henry VI;

his son, Prince Edward of Westminster; and his cousins Edmund and John Beaufort.

As a consequence of this bloodletting, the previously lightly regarded Henry Tudor, still just 14 years old, was suddenly in the Yorkist crosshairs. As one foreign ambassador remarked, Edward IV was determined to "crush the seed" of Lancastrianism. Henry was at Chepstow with his uncle Jasper when they were set upon by a Yorkist soldier sent by the king to seize them. Jasper was able to turn the tables and kill this would-be captor but, conscious that reinforcements would soon appear, the two Tudors quickly set off across the wilds of south Wales.

At Jasper's seat, Pembroke, they were besieged for eight tense and terrifying days before escaping to the nearby coastal fort of Tenby. Uncle and nephew scrambled through a network of underground tunnels down to the harbour, where they hopped into a waiting vessel. Their departure marked the start of 14 years of exile for Henry. Tossed by a storm, the Tudors eventually made landfall in Brittany. There they received the protection of Duke Francis II.

A pawn in the game

When Edward IV discovered that Henry had escaped, he sought to manipulate Francis's very real fears of being conquered by the acquisitive French crown. Brittany and Yorkist England were allies, and Edward expected Francis to surrender the Tudors



What kind of king was Henry VII?

Read Nathen Amin's comprehensive guide to the first Tudor king of England at [historyextra.com/henry-vii-guide](https://www.historyextra.com/henry-vii-guide)



Stronghold under siege

The 12th-century Pembroke Castle was Henry's birthplace – but also where he and his uncle Jasper were besieged by the forces of Edward IV in 1471, when Henry was just 14

Henry and Jasper were besieged for eight tense, terrifying days before escaping to the nearby coastal fort of Tenby

at once. But Francis hesitated. If he turned over Henry, he would have no bargaining chip with which to extract military or financial support from the English, who were equally keen that the Bretons didn't deliver the Tudors to the French.

Hampered by geopolitics, Francis instead swore "upon his honour" to protect his guests. Hence the disconcerted Henry found himself a pawn in a fluid Anglo-French-Breton diplomatic tussle; like a ship in a tempest, his fate lay outside his control.

For much of the next dozen years, Henry was closely observed, his movement curtailed and his servants heavily vetted. According to a contemporary observation by the Frenchman Philippe de Commines, the Tudors were treated "very handsomely for prisoners", but it was clear that they were vulnerable to the whims of others.

This became evident five years into Henry's Breton exile. In early 1476, Edward IV

sought once more to get his hands on this evasive Lancastrian ally who remained tantalisingly out of his grasp. An embassy was sent across the Channel armed with chests of gold, hoping to persuade the Bretons to release their Tudor guest. Duke Francis's resolve was weakened, and he "committed the sheep to the wolf", handing Henry to Edward's delegation.

The jubilant English envoys decamped to Saint-Malo, ready for the voyage back to their awaiting king. Still just 19, Henry likely viewed the ships in the harbour with trepidation, knowing that, as "the only imp" of Henry VI's blood still living, he was being "carried to his death".

So, at the final moment, Henry faked an illness. This provided an opportunity for the Bretons to change their mind, and in the confusion that ensued he managed to slip away from his captors, fleeing through the narrow streets to claim sanctuary in the



Decisive victory An 18th-century depiction of the battle of Bosworth. This 1485 clash saw Henry's army defeat that of Richard III, allowing the Tudor pretender to claim the throne

cathedral. When the Englishmen tried to force their way in, they were beaten back by the outraged local populace and returned home empty handed.

Plotting the return

The next six years of Henry's exile passed with little incident, living once more at the Breton court under the aegis of a contrite duke. For much of this time, Henry's mother, Margaret Beaufort, worked hard to convince a mellowing Edward IV to permit her son to return home – and not to the chopping block. By June 1482 she had wrested a draft pardon from Edward, which stipulated that Henry could return – provided he bend the knee to the Yorkist king. He would be restored to the earldom of Richmond, and there was even a potential marriage to Edward's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York, on the cards.

But on 9 April 1483, before the negotiations could be concluded, Edward IV died. Within weeks the deceased king's brother had orchestrated a coup to become Richard III. The Yorkist court was bitterly divided between those who accepted the sidelining of Edward's sons and those who didn't. And when rumours spread that Richard's nephews – popularly known today as the princes in the Tower – had been put to death, dismay manifested into outright rebellion.

Concerned that Richard seemed unwilling to honour the pardon Edward IV had drafted for Henry, Margaret Beaufort now extended the hand of friendship to the princes' grief-stricken mother, Elizabeth Woodville. The two women arranged to put past differences behind them to take down a common foe. The Duke of Buckingham – who himself had a royal claim – was persuaded to abandon his erstwhile ally, Richard, and lead the crusade.

Buckingham roused his tenants in October 1483, intending to link up with the Woodville contingent and an invading Henry Tudor. The uprising, however, proved farcical.

Henry had possibly witnessed the beheading of his guardian, and been forced to flee for his life

Buckingham was captured with ease, and was executed soon afterwards. The Woodvilles were scattered, and Henry never even succeeded in making landfall in England.

The upshot of Buckingham's death, combined with the belief that the Yorkist princes had been killed, was that there now remained only one realistic challenger for Richard's crown: Henry Tudor. There is no evidence from before the end of 1483 that Henry or his mother had any aspirations for him to be king. And he was regarded by one foreign contemporary, Philippe de Commines, as a "person of no power, and one who had been long prisoner" who was "not the next heir to the crown". Even so, Henry saw an opportunity – and seized it.

On Christmas Day 1483, Henry made a solemn promise to English rebels gathered before him in St Peter's Cathedral, Rennes. If they sponsored his unlikely bid to be king, he would return their seized estates and offices. To further bind the Yorkist element to his cause, he swore to marry Elizabeth of York and symbolically unite the two warring royal houses. It was a bold gambit – but it paid off: the rebels pledged their fealty "as though he had already been created king". This marked an astonishing turnaround in Tudor fortunes.

Now regarded by Richard III as "the king's great rebel and traitor", Henry's task was



Powers behind the throne Three women played key roles in Henry's story: from left, his mother, Margaret Beaufort, who persuaded Edward IV's widow, Elizabeth Woodville, to help bring down Richard III; and Elizabeth of York, Edward's daughter, whose marriage to Henry in 1486 helped unify support for the new king

daunting. He spent the first few months of 1484 trying to persuade Duke Francis of Brittany to fund a fresh enterprise against the English king, but was himself nearly outmanoeuvred by a wily Richard.

When Francis was taken ill, Richard sent across another embassy to deal with the Breton treasurer, Pierre Landais. Seeking personal enrichment, Landais promised to have an oblivious Henry seized and handed over. Fortunately for Henry, the Tudor camp had a spy in Richard's council, and a messenger swiftly travelled to Brittany to warn Henry of his impending betrayal.

Through necessity, the young Tudor had grown into a cautious adult, and took this news gravely. He summoned a few trusted figures to his side, and hatched yet another escape plan. He had already made two improbable flights during his lifetime: first as a 14-year-old in Tenby and again as a 19-year-old in Saint-Malo. Now, aged 27, he looked to complete a third.

At some point in September 1484, Henry departed his court-in-exile under the pretence of visiting an acquaintance. Just a few miles into his journey, Henry and his companions left the road. He quickly changed into the clothes of a servant and, suitably disguised, rode hard for the French border. When they realised that something was afoot, the Bretons sent out a search party to bring Henry back. Stopping only briefly to water his exhausted horse, Henry made it

into France with just an hour to spare. Once again, he had completed a remarkable escape.

Once the French discovered that Henry was on their turf, they immediately welcomed him to court, where he was treated with every courtesy. More importantly – and for their own ends – the French crown publicly sponsored Henry's campaign to “recover the Kingdom of England”, and began to source funding and soldiers.

Richard on the ropes

Richard III was outraged by this development, and rued his failure to get his hands on Henry. On 7 December 1484, the king issued a scathing proclamation – a masterful exercise in propaganda, lashing out at the “rebels and traitors” who had taken as their captain a man of “ambitious and insatiable covetousness [with] no manner, interest, right or colour” to his crown. All, Richard thundered, had not only forsaken their rightful king and natural country, but were murderers, adulterers and extortioners, moral delinquents who would inflict great harm on the English people if successful in their venture. Richard expected all “good and true Englishmen” to remain loyal.

Henry and his supporters persevered, however. Having secured a series of personal loans from a number of merchants to bolster his war chest, by the summer of 1485 the would-be king was ready to set sail. He led a modest force largely comprising French

mercenaries and a few hundred English rebels with nothing to lose.

On 1 August 1485, Henry stepped onto a ship moored in Harfleur harbour. As he awaited a favourable wind to take him across the Channel to his uncertain fate, he may have reflected on his life to this point – and his repeated brushes with death.

Removed from his family as a child, he had possibly witnessed the beheading of his guardian, and been forced to flee for his life on more than one occasion while still in his teens. As a claimant to the English throne, his life was still in constant peril. It is easy to picture Henry on the deck of his ship, staring out to sea, vowing that – if this unlikely quest proved successful – he would never again be a pawn in others' games.

History has adjudged Henry a king racked with suspicions – a trait that left him unloved and unmourned at death. His path to the throne, however, had taught him to be wary of both friend and foe. His court biographer, Polydore Vergil, wrote of Henry that “his mind was brave and resolute and never, even at the moments of the greatest danger, deserted him”. Life experience had taught Henry to be guarded; far from a weakness, it was an attribute that served him well as king. He was suspicious, yes, but also successful – and a true survivor. ■

Nathen Amin's new book is *Son of Prophecy: The Rise of Henry Tudor*, published by Amberley in July

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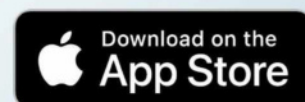
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BBC **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE



THE GENIUS IN THE SHADOWS

Æthelstan is one of the greatest of all Anglo-Saxon monarchs. So why, asks **Michael Wood**, does the first king of the English remain so fiendishly elusive?

It's been a wonderful couple of decades for medieval royals. King Edward I has bestridden the stage again, thanks to Marc Morris's gripping biography, *A Great and Terrible King*. Edward's father has emerged from the shadows in David Carpenter's recent doorstopper, *Henry III*. And five queens – Eleanor of Aquitaine and Margaret of Anjou among them – have bathed in the spotlight once more, courtesy of Helen Castor's *She-Wolves*.

When it comes to historical biography, the Middle Ages – or, at least, the latter half of the Middle Ages – remains a perennial favourite.

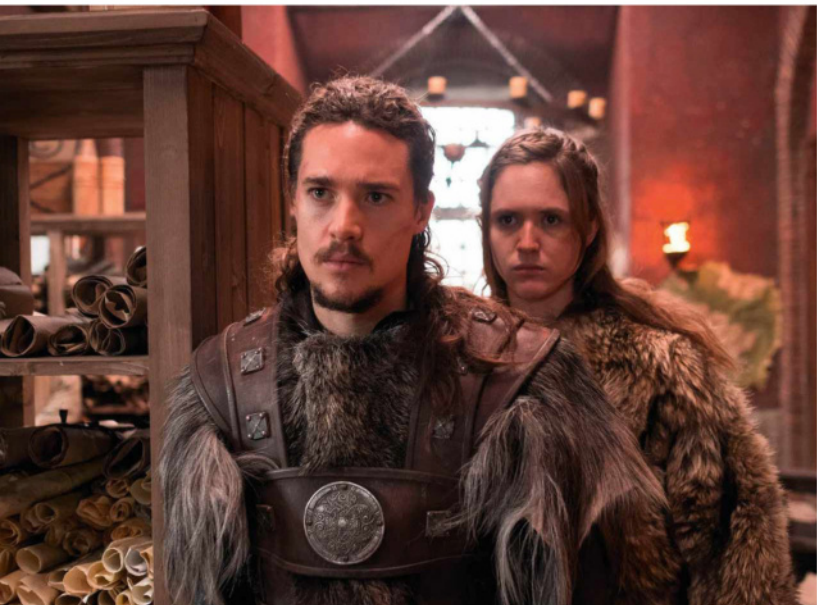
Further back, in the so-called Dark Ages and the Viking Age in Britain, it's a different story. Though there's no end to popular fiction (think *The Last Kingdom*, the wildly successful TV drama based around the adventures of a Saxon lord), biography is more problematic. The sources are often hugely difficult to penetrate, and so the challenge of producing a sequential narrative of a life – revealing personality, motivations and feelings – is an enormous one. It's something I have found myself mulling over as I finally return this year to a long delayed project: a biography of Æthelstan, first king of the English.

It was 1100 years ago this summer that the Mercians chose Æthelstan to be their king. His father, Edward the Elder, had died on 17 July 924 – followed to the grave, just 16 days later, by his designated heir, Æthelstan's younger half-brother Ælfweard. A succession crisis ensued and Æthelstan was only (perhaps grudgingly?) accepted by the West Saxons the following year. On 4 September 925, he was crowned 'King of the Anglo-Saxons' – that is, of the Mercians and West Saxons. Within two years, he was king of all England.

Æthelstan's comparatively short reign (he died in 939) has long been shadowy, but it has always looked like a turning point. The origins of the English state, the introduction of Carolingian-styled kingship, the beginnings of the English parliament, the transformation of

Invisible man

Æthelstan shown in a manuscript dated to before 1399. The king extended English influence through a mixture of diplomacy and military might



War stories Based on the adventures of a Saxon lord, *The Last Kingdom* fed off public fascination with the early Middle Ages



Hidden depths Danes sail for England in a 12th-century manuscript. We know what people did in the Viking Age; but what they felt and thought is harder to divine

English law, even perhaps the first English translation of the Gospels – all have their roots in those 14 years he was in power. Now, more than a millennium later, the Æthelstan bandwagon has truly begun to roll. In 2021, the king was crowned Greatest English Monarch by *The Rest Is History* podcast, in a poll of 84,000 voters.

So it seems that I am far from alone in finding this pivotal time in English history fascinating. My own interest in Æthelstan dates back to my schooldays, when I read Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*. Stenton thought the king was the greatest English statesman of whom no biography existed. The Old English scholar Kenneth Sisam penned a letter to Stenton after publication in 1943, urging him to write that biography. "So many things," Sisam observed, "begin with him."

They certainly do. Which is why, ever since I was a graduate student, I have hoped one day to write my own biography of Æthelstan. But though I have written many articles and made films about him, the draft of the book has been in my drawer for more than 30 years.

So why the long delay? Well, first of all, there's the perennial problem of writing biographies of people in early medieval Britain – the complications presented by fragmentary sources. And, layered on top of that, there are challenges peculiar to Æthelstan himself. Take the 'Great War' of 937. This saw the king defeat a huge invasion of England led by a coalition of Vikings, Scots and north British forces – at an unknown location. If we don't even know where the most important event of Æthelstan's reign took place, then our understanding of that reign is uncertain, to say the least.

Thinking about biography more broadly, and looking at the 500 or so years after the end of Rome, you think first of Peter Brown's life of Augustine of Hippo, beginning with its brilliant evocation of the late

Roman world on the sun-beaten shore of north Africa. But, of course, Augustine was a writer. He shares his thoughts and feelings with us. Some 250 letters survive, along with an autobiography, the *Confessions*. We feel we really can know him. What wouldn't we give to have something like that in the Viking Age?

To the east, Byzantium has proven fertile territory for biography. For his sweeping 2023 *Justinian: Emperor, Soldier, Saint*, Peter Sarris could draw on a rich array of contemporary sources, not least the histories of Procopius, Agathias and John Malalas.

In western Europe, though, the things we really want to know are often hard to find, though there are exceptions. For that best-known of all Old English kings, Alfred, we've got Asser's biography, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and a body of writings in some sense dictated by the king – all assembled in Penguin's superb *Alfred the Great* by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge. But even here, modern historians have been curiously unwilling to try to exploit his personal writings for clues to Alfred's religious beliefs, sex life and masculinity. The huge *Alfred the Great* by Alfred Smyth, for example, is not a sequential account of the king's life and what he thought and felt.

Hopes and dreams

Some would still say that such an undertaking is simply not possible. Early medieval people, they would contend, must remain largely hidden behind the veil of scholarly Latin until we get to the 12th-century renaissance and the likes of French philosopher Peter Abelard. Only then does human personality again open up as it did with Augustine more than half a millennium earlier: with feelings, loves, hopes and dreams.

In the case of Æthelstan, we have none of that. There's nothing, so far as we know, actually spoken or written by him, apart from a few fascinating remarks recorded by stenographers at law-making meetings. We've got letters written to him, but not by him. There are his book

Æthelstan was voted Greatest English Monarch in a poll of 84,000 people

ÆTHELSTAN'S WATERSHED MOMENTS

From defeating Vikings to a cultural renaissance, Michael Wood reveals what we know about the king

inscriptions, some perhaps dictated. There are his charters, among the most interesting pieces of Latin prose of the age, which meld a high-flown rhetoric of rule with the eschatological tone of a sermon or homily. These were surely approved by the king in this form – but they were not composed by him.

That, you have to say, is par for the course for that time in Britain. Faced with this, the historian Norman Cantor actually went so far as to invent, or 'recreate', conversations, for his 1994 book *Medieval Lives*. From there, it's a short leap to Hilary Mantel's brilliant fictions and her uncanny evocation in *Wolf Hall* not only of the life of Thomas Cromwell but his inwardness, his memory. This, we *feel*, is what he must have been like.

What to do then? Well, sympathetic imagination can take you a long way while still sticking to the sources. The brilliant economic historian Eileen Power proved as much in the 1920s in her book *Medieval People*. I followed Power's lead in my 2008 BBC film *Christina: A Medieval Life*, about a poor medieval villein on the St Albans estate of Codicote who lived between the 1270s and the Black Death. This showed what you could get out of apparently unyielding sources: court books, surveys and rentals. When, in the worst winter of famine, Christina's neighbour Roger Gorman sells off his remaining plough gear and eventually dies of starvation, leaving nothing "because he had nothing", you are right down there with what life was like for poor medieval people.

Sexual indiscretions

Sympathetic imagination was also to the fore in Janet Nelson's dazzling attempt to recreate the life of an early medieval ruler. In *King and Emperor: A New Life of Charlemagne*, Nelson uses a lifetime's experience to subtly tease magic out of the sources. Quarrying hints from Charlemagne's early years, Nelson gives us convincing flashes of insight, even (from a later source) the king's own voice as an inquisitive seven-year-old: "The day I lost my first milk tooth."

In the ninth century, the Frankish scholar Einhard wrote a biography of Charlemagne telling of the king's *vita et conversatio*, his 'life and life style'. But then, Einhard says, he will turn from public deeds to the king's "interior and domestic life". This was what medieval readers really wanted to know about. Charlemagne had a full domestic life that would have engrossed the tabloids today. There were many concubines and he was later imagined howling in hell for his sexual indiscretions.

There are similar hints in Asser's account of Alfred: that the king's painful disease of the bowels (which started on his wedding night!) might have been divine punishment for his libidinous teens.

With Æthelstan, there are no such gems. He never married, so it would appear. He had no children (we think). No women are mentioned. (Was he gay? asks Sarah Foot in her book on the king). But the idea that Æthelstan had a *vita interior* at all – at a time when kings can hardly have enjoyed much of a private life – is worth pondering.

A hundred years ago, in *The Times of Saint Dunstan*, J Armitage Robinson showed what might be gathered about Æthelstan's interior life from unconsidered trifles: book inscriptions, burnt manuscripts, relic lists; his

Æthelstan was **on the throne for a mere 14 years**, but that was ample time for him to change the course of British history. He was born in c894, the son of Edward the Elder and the **grandson of Alfred the Great**. He was crowned 'King of the Anglo-Saxons' (ie of the Mercians and West Saxons) in 925 and two years later – after conquering York, the last remaining Viking kingdom – became **the first king of all the English**. This was the springboard for an ambitious attempt to create a national kingship based on the ideas of the ninth-century Carolingian Renaissance, which had flourished under the Frankish emperor Charlemagne.

Æthelstan's reign is now seen as a watershed in the birth of the English state, witnessing key developments in administration, culture, law – and, courtesy of his assembly politics, **the origins of the English parliament**. The recruiting of foreign scholars and the importing of foreign manuscripts also intensified during his reign, a key phase in the restoration of English culture after the Vikings.

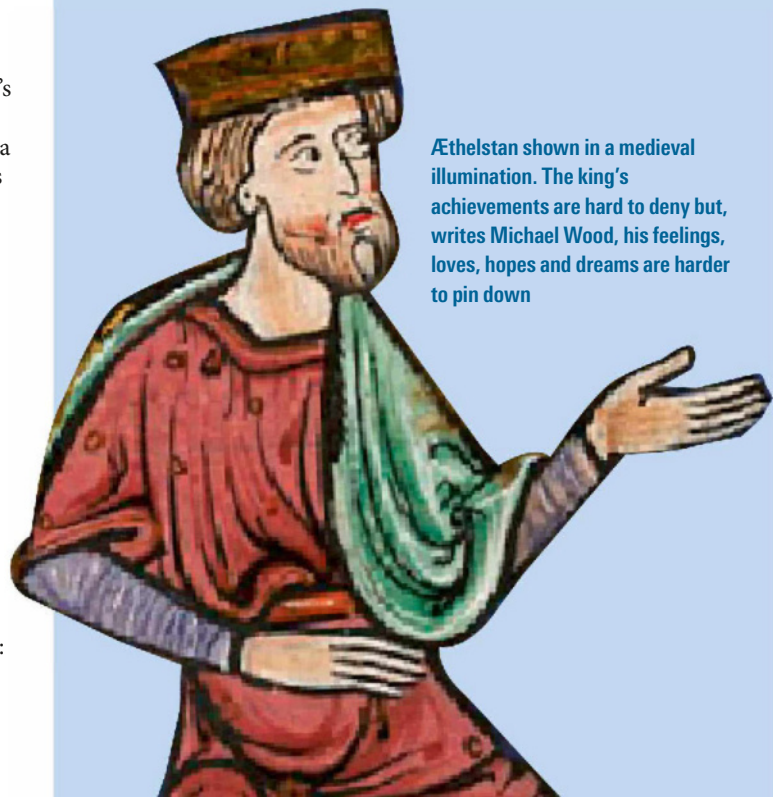
This was also a period in which England played a **greater role on the European stage**. Some of Æthelstan's sisters married European rulers, he sheltered foreign princes,

and his diplomacy extended along the coast of western Europe from Norway to Brittany.

However, Æthelstan **could deploy military might**, as well as diplomacy, when the circumstances demanded it. His reign saw the modern kingdoms of Scotland and Wales emerge for the first time, but his empire was resisted by the kings of Scotland and Strathclyde.

Æthelstan invaded Scotland in 934. Three years later the tables were turned when a coalition of northerners and their Viking allies invaded England. Æthelstan triumphed over the coalition at **the battle of Brunanburh in 937**, now widely acknowledged as one of the most important battles of Britain's early Middle Ages.

Æthelstan died in 939, leaving little behind in the way of sources. A biography of the king was written in the later 10th century – perhaps this was the book listed as *The Wars of King Æthelstan* in the 1247/48 library catalogue at Glastonbury – yet it was presumably destroyed in Henry VIII's Reformation. With this potentially priceless source seemingly lost to history, modern attempts to reconstruct his life must, at times, be speculative.



Æthelstan shown in a medieval illumination. The king's achievements are hard to deny but, writes Michael Wood, his feelings, loves, hopes and dreams are harder to pin down



There are hints of his reverence for Alfred the Great, whom he knew till he was five or six

intellectual curiosity, his love of books. And also, of course, his religion, with what are to us the weird obsessions of the early Middle Ages: the pervasive belief in the cult of relics and the literal trust in dreams and visions. There were other aspects, too: the king's friendships, his guests and the foreign scholars in his international court.

The biographer's main focus inevitably falls on Æthelstan's time as king. But what of his early life? Here we must admit we will mostly never know. There are hints: a tale of the boy and his grandfather; a childhood poem; a teenage encounter with the divine. Especially, I would guess, there was his reverence for his grandfather King Alfred, whom he knew till he was five or six but who had "affectionately kissed him... in omen of a kingdom". There was also his beloved aunt Æthelflæd, his foster mother who brought him up in Mercia.

An inseparable companion

We know much more if only we had the lost 10th-century biography discovered by the historian William of Malmesbury in the 1120s in "an obviously ancient manuscript", perhaps in the library at Glastonbury. If this had survived, our view of Æthelstan – indeed of the entire beginnings of the English state – would be totally transformed.

In the modern edition of William of Malmesbury's *Deeds of the Kings*, the excerpts from the lost book amount to eight pages of prose precis and 63 lines of verse. From these we can see the poem was in Latin hexameters in the style of the school of St Æthelwold of Winchester, written maybe in the 970s. Judging by what William gives us, the poem was weighted towards the early part of the reign with fascinating and otherwise unknown detail on the first few years.

The text evidently drew on an eyewitness, and it is tempting to speculate that the informant was Æthelwold himself, who as a young man spent several years in the king's court. We know that Æthelwold later told his own biographer, Wulfstan Cantor, many stories of his childhood and youth, looking back more than half a century, and described himself as the king's "inseparable companion".

This enables us to see, for example, William's story of the

Frankish embassy to Abingdon in 926 in a new light. Our eyewitness was evidently there that day, and conveys the sense of wonder, the sheer thrill of the king and his court, as stupendous treasures, including the Holy Lance and the Sword of Constantine, were laid out for all to see, "lighting up the eyes of the bystanders".

In a precious late Antique onyx vase "you seemed to see real ripples of corn waving, men really moving... its surface reflecting the faces of the onlookers". A magnificent Carolingian crown "dazzled all around with its shine". There was also "a small piece of the holy and ever to be adored cross enclosed in crystal, which the eye could see through, solid rock though it is, and discern the wood, its colour and size". In moments like that, we are right there with them.

The sources, then, can give us more than has been thought. From all this, I think we can paint a believable picture of a man who, as William of Malmesbury says, writing 200 years on, was still viewed by popular opinion as "the most just and most learned in Latin letters who ever ruled the state". An English-style Carolingian renaissance prince.

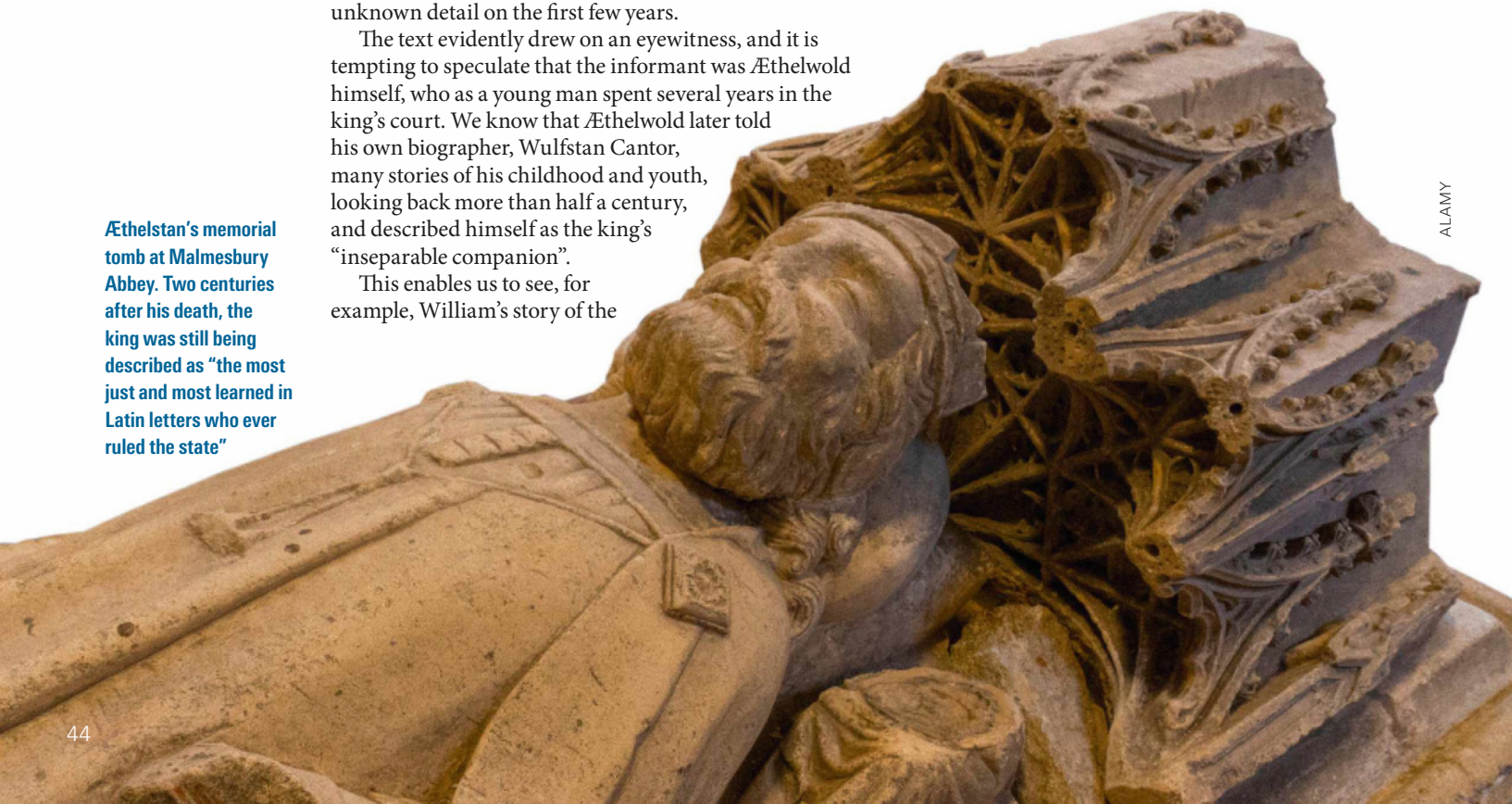
And England's Greatest Monarch? Unlikely as that would have sounded even recently, the point of a new biography is to show that it is not entirely fanciful. **H**

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester and the presenter of numerous BBC series. He is currently working on a biography of Æthelstan



The life of Æthelstan is being celebrated in Malmesbury this summer and autumn in the **Æthelstan1100 festival**: aethelstan1100.co.uk

Æthelstan's memorial tomb at Malmesbury Abbey. Two centuries after his death, the king was still being described as "the most just and most learned in Latin letters who ever ruled the state"





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Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

What is the oldest object that is currently standing in London?

▶▶▶ Just a short walk from the Houses of Parliament along the Victoria Embankment looms a 20.88-metre-tall, pyramid-tipped monolith inscribed with hieroglyphics: the ancient obelisk known as Cleopatra's Needle. Nearly 3,500 years old, this monument is the oldest human-made object on London's streets. It was sculpted around 1450 BC for the pharaoh Thutmose III from granite quarried in southern Egypt, and was originally erected in Heliopolis, near present-day Cairo. This was a major cult centre for solar worship, considered home to the sun god, Ra; various obelisks were raised there to venerate that deity.

In 12 BC, more than 14 centuries after its creation, the obelisk was relocated to Alexandria. This Hellenistic city on Egypt's Mediterranean coast prospered under the final pharaonic dynasty, the Ptolemies – of which Cleopatra VII became the most famous member.

The obelisk we now call Cleopatra's Needle was a gift from Muhammad Ali, the de facto ruler of Egypt, to the British government in 1819, in recognition of British victories under Horatio Nelson at the battle of the Nile in 1798 and Sir Ralph Abercromby at the battle of Alexandria in 1801. Yet it wasn't until 1877 that the obelisk was taken from Egypt to be erected in London.

So what does this monument have to do with the fabled queen Cleopatra? Absolutely nothing. Instead, the nickname is linked to its journey to London.

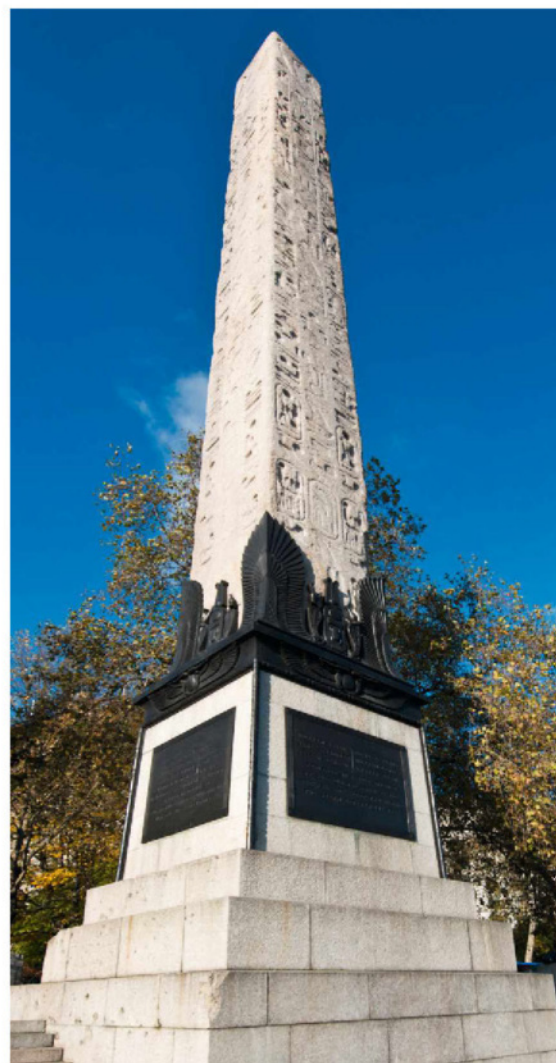
The challenge of transporting this massive hunk of granite, weighing perhaps 200 tonnes, inspired the British public to raise £15,000 to fund the endeavour. Sealed inside an iron cylinder, it was rolled into the sea, creating a vessel that was christened *Cleopatra*. Pulled by the steamship *Olga*, it sailed from Alexandria on 21 September 1877.

Olga had left the Mediterranean and rounded the Iberian peninsula when tragedy struck in the Bay of Biscay: a fierce storm hit, six men drowned and the *Cleopatra* drifted away, presumed lost. Four days later, though, it was spotted and towed to Ferrol, Spain, eventually arriving in Gravesend on

21 January 1878. The obelisk was finally erected in its current location by the Thames on 12 September.

In 1881, two bronze sphinxes cast in nearby Pimlico were installed, flanking the obelisk. A plaque affixed to its base commemorates the six men who lost their lives bringing it to Britain, and you can also see shrapnel scars inflicted on the base and western sphinx by a German air raid in September 1917.

.....
Danny Bird, staff writer,
BBC History Magazine



The obelisk now known as Cleopatra's Needle stood in Egypt for well over three millennia before being transported to London



This large red cushion in the House of Lords is actually a bale of wool – a symbol of that fibre's importance to the medieval English economy

Why does a bale of wool sit in the House of Lords?

▶▶▶ The UK parliament is steeped in arcane and often baffling traditions with long histories, such as slamming the chamber door into the face of the usher known as Black Rod. Arguably one of the strangest is the large bale of wool placed directly in front of the sovereign's throne in the House of Lords.

Known as the Woolsack, this red-cloth-covered cushion is the seat on which the Lord Speaker rests while presiding over debates in parliament's upper house. It's believed to have been mandated by Edward III as a reminder to his lords of the significance of the lucrative wool trade to the English economy in the 14th century.

The Woolsack's status was formalised in 1621. The mace is placed at its rear to represent royal authority. To maintain order, members of the house are forbidden from passing between the Woolsack and any speaking member or the table.

In 1938, the Woolsack was examined and found to contain only hair – whereupon it was restuffed with wool from across the UK and the Commonwealth. **DB**

Purported 'Aztec death whistles' sold at tourist sites don't resemble the only authentic instruments found at archaeological sites



Did the 'Aztec death whistle' really mimic the sound of human screams?

»» If you type 'Aztec death whistle' into TikTok you'll be served hundreds of results, including "I used this creepy Aztec whistle to scare mom" and "this horrifying whistle resembles a human scream". There's even one user, calling himself 'Death Whistle King', who has well over 300,000 followers and devotes his entire channel to the instrument.

Many of the whistles depicted on camera are shaped like skulls. In one video, a street trader in the ancient Mexican city of Teotihuacan sells such a whistle to a tourist, who blows into it. When it screeches, he says: "Imagine hearing... warriors in the jungle coming after you playing this!"

These so-called 'Aztec death whistles' aren't authentic – in fact, they're more like toys – but the truth behind the replicas is even stranger than the myths floating around on TikTok.

The only real 'death whistles' with archaeological context were found in 1999, in the hands of the skeleton of a 20-year-old man sacrificed centuries earlier in front of the Ehecatl (wind god) temple at the Tlatelolco site in Mexico City. Archaeologists believe that the skull images on the small ceramic

whistles he held represent Mictlantecutli, Aztec god of the underworld, who is closely linked with Ehecatl. In a pre-Columbian document known as the Codex Borgia, the two gods are shown standing back to back.

The idea that these whistles emit a sound like a human scream when blown is another misconception. In 2000, music archaeologist Arnd Adje Both became the first person to recreate sounds produced by the whistles found in Tlatelolco, playing replicas made using CT scans of the originals. Each sounds slightly different, but both emit noises resembling wind, not shrieks.

There is also no evidence that these whistles were used to terrify enemies in battle, though that doesn't mean they're not fascinating in other ways. Roberto Velázquez Cabrera, an expert in ancient Mexican resonators and other wind instruments, discovered that, when played simultaneously, the ancient whistles produced ultra-low-pitched sounds that could potentially alter states of consciousness.

.....
Hilary Mitchell, freelance journalist and editor

DID YOU KNOW...?

Disregard for death

An ancient Greek philosopher announced at the Olympic Games of AD 161 that he would burn himself to death at the next event – and, four years later, he did just that. On the final night of the Olympics in AD 165, Peregrinus Proteus lit his own funeral pyre and leapt into the flames. He wanted, he reportedly said, "to put a tip of gold on a golden life" and to "benefit mankind by showing them the way in which one should disregard death".

Thirst for justice

A statue in Paisley, Renfrewshire commemorates a woman whose main claim to fame is that she once found a decomposing snail in a ginger beer bottle. May Donoghue was served the drink in a cafe in August 1928, and downed it before spotting the offending mollusc. Unsurprisingly, she became ill – and sued the manufacturer of the drink. The case of Donoghue v Stevenson laid the foundation for modern negligence law, and the statue of Mrs Donoghue was erected in 2018.

Animal inspiration

The Victorian poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti kept a small menagerie of exotic creatures in his London house. These included wallabies, an armadillo and a toucan, which he dressed in a cowboy's hat and trained to ride around on the back of a llama. His favourite creature was the wombat, of which he owned several. A pen drawing by Rossetti shows him weeping while crouched beside the dead body of one of his wombats, its legs in the air.

.....
Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history



Dante Gabriel Rossetti mourns one of his pet wombats in an 1869 drawing by the Pre-Raphaelite artist and poet

WHY DO WE SAY...

...by hook or by crook?

»» We use this phrase to mean that we'll get something done, no matter how. The rhyme is apparent, but the origin is not – though people keep guessing. Some point to 1169, when Henry II invaded Ireland, suggesting that the Anglo-Normans planned to land on Hook Head in Wexford and at the nearby village of Crooke in Waterford. Yet supporters of this etymology can't provide a source, which makes their explanation worthless.

Next we fast forward to 1666, the year of the Great Fire of London, when the ghosts of Messrs Hook and Crook – surveyors employed in determining the rights of claimants whose houses were destroyed, and who managed to satisfy everybody – are conjured up. Once again, no documents confirm their existence (though Robert Hooke did assist Christopher Wren).

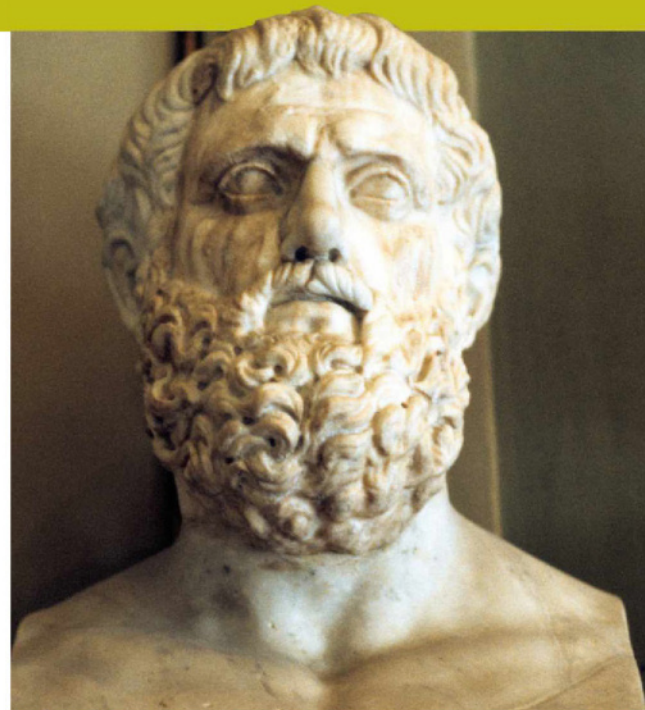
Both hypotheses are also at odds with chronology. The idiom first

surfaced in writing around 1380, and must have been coined at about that time – too late for Henry's invaders and hopelessly early for the fire. Other candidates for having inspired the phrase include a pair of crooked judges and two ferrymen on the Thames.

A probable source of the phrase has been found in the Middle Ages, though. People were allowed to enter privately owned forests and take dead wood for fuel – as long as it wasn't cut but hauled only by hook (hooked poles) or with a crook, a documented practice. This custom was later forgotten, but the catchy medieval phrase remained in use.



.....
Anatoly Liberman,
professor and author of
*An Analytic Dictionary
of English Etymology*
(University of Minnesota
Press, 2008)



A bust showing the iconic ancient Greek philosopher Plato. His dialogues describe extreme forms of governance

Did Plato's ideas foreshadow fascism?

»» Fascism is one of those annoying weasel words, the definition of which is essentially contested. Whose fascism and what fascism, exactly, are we talking about here? One (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary) definition suggests "an extreme rightwing political system or attitude that is in favour of strong central government... and that does not allow any opposition". But an attitude is not the same as an idea, let alone a set of them. Plato's ideas on politics modulated (though they did not moderate) over the span of his very long life – from the *Republic* of the 370s BC through the *Statesman* of the 360s to the *Laws* of the 340s, the latter of his dialogues completed in his ninth decade, before he died c347 BC.

Certainly there are family resemblances between ancient and modern versions of such ideologies. Politicians and political philosophers of the last century, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, saw Plato as some kind of proto-fascist. His 'philosopher-king' rulers (in his *Republic*) and Nocturnal Council-run oligarchy (*Laws*) are examples of extreme, centralising, opposition-excluding governance. But there is too wide a gulf between Plato's bugbear, the Athenian democracy of the fourth century BC, and the post-First World War tyrannies and dictatorships for 'foreshadowing' in any direct sense to be applicable.

.....
Paul Cartledge, AG Leventis professor of Greek culture emeritus, University of Cambridge



ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN McBETH



The Sultan's Palace in Zanzibar Town lies in ruins after the 40-minute bombardment by British forces that comprised the entire Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896

What was the shortest war in history?

»» Lasting around 40 minutes, the Anglo-Zanzibar War, fought on 27 August 1896, is the shortest conflict in history. After the sudden death of Sultan Hamad ibn Thuwayn – who was almost certainly poisoned – his cousin Prince Khālid ibn Barghash seized control of Zanzibar Palace. This irked the British, whose preferred successor was the more compliant Hamud ibn Mohammed.

Determined to retain control over the strategically significant east African archipelago, which would allow them to enforce their policies such as the abolition of slavery, the British reacted swiftly. Rear Admiral Harry Rawson of the Royal Navy delivered an ultimatum to Khālid: surrender by 9am – or face military action.

He refused, and British warships immediately bombarded the palace, inflicting extensive damage and casualties. Khālid's

forces, numbering around 3,000, were overwhelmed and 500 casualties were sustained. Meanwhile, just one British sailor was seriously injured during the brief skirmish.

Khālid fled to seek sanctuary in the German consulate, and Hamud – installed as the new sultan later that day – pledged to honour British demands on Zanzibar. This fleeting but decisive altercation entrenched Britain's dominance in the region well into the 20th century. **DB**



Cheap, pale porcelain dolls were made in vast numbers in the 19th century, later being named for the subject of a popular ballad

What were Frozen Charlotte dolls?

»» From the mid-19th century until the 1920s, cheap dolls with no moveable parts, usually made of china or bisque porcelain, sold in huge numbers in the US and Europe. They came in a range of sizes, with the smaller models suitable for dolls' houses. Some of them had moulded clothes, but most were naked; presumably you could make costumes for them, though some were designed specifically to float in the bath. They were known by all manner of names, but most commonly in both Britain and America as 'penny dolls'.

Since the 1950s, these simple toys have been known as Frozen Charlottes. This name was apparently based on the erroneous assumption that the dolls were inspired by a mawkish 1840s American ballad about a girl travelling to a winter ball by sleigh. Keen to be admired in her fine dress, she refuses to wrap up against the cold – and freezes to death. There's no evidence that the dolls were connected to this ghoulish tale, but Frozen Charlotte is a handy term for collectors. **H**

Eugene Byrne, author and historian

From china cups

The suffragettes crafted a brilliant PR campaign, driven by everything from branded marmalade to marching bands. But did their quest for publicity eventually backfire? **Ellie Cawthorne** investigates an Edwardian battle for hearts and minds



ALAMY/MUSEUM OF LONDON

to letter bombs

Green and purple patch

Many Women's Social and Political Union offices incorporated shops – shown here is the Putney and Fulham branch – selling green, white and purple WSPU-branded products such as 'angel of freedom' badges (inset)



Suffragette activism

Whinnying kittens, cackling geese, wizened crones, toothless old bags: the portrayals of activists on anti-suffrage postcards circulating at the beginning of the 20th century are brutally unflattering.

"Suffragettes were often portrayed as desiccated spinsters who'd never been kissed, and whose sexual frustration made them bitter and twisted and led them to attack society," says historian Diane Atkinson. "They were shown as careless, selfish women who abandoned their families and responsibilities in pursuit of politics."

One postcard shows a bawling baby in the middle of an almighty tantrum. The caption underneath reads: "Mummy's a Suffragette." As Atkinson explains, such images transmitted a clear message to anyone who saw them: "Suffragettes were bad mothers. They were bad wives. They were bad people."

Before they could convert anyone to their cause – in short, 'votes for women' – the suffragettes had to convince the public that they were not bitter old crones or shrieking banshees. What they needed was a rebrand – and, as we explore in our new podcast series, *Deeds not Words*, the campaigning suffragettes were masters at getting their message out there. Whether through headline-grabbing stunts, creating a dynamic and memorable public image for their movement, or even their pitch-perfect merchandise campaign, the suffragettes knew how to make a statement.

'Brand suffragette'

As those sneering postcards demonstrate, the suffragettes' fight to reclaim their public image would be an uphill battle. However, according to historian Fern Riddell, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) – the organisation at the heart of the movement – was "absolutely fantastic at running a PR campaign. Advertising and mass media had really started to emerge in the 19th century," she adds, "and the suffragettes were quick to capitalise on the fact that we're very visual creatures. They understood that if you give people something exciting to look at, they're going to remember it."

In this creation of 'brand suffragette' they "were able to draw on a vast pool of expertise", says Atkinson. "Women who were great artists, designers, embroiderers and actresses all contributed their talents to help create a campaign that was very modern and 'sexy' for the time."

One such woman was Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, the WSPU's multi-talented

treasurer, who in 1908 invented a colour scheme for the campaign. Each hue held a specific symbolic meaning: green for hope, white for purity in private and public life, purple for freedom and dignity.

It was a memorably unusual combination, instantly recognisable – and Pethick-Lawrence was quick to recognise its potential. In her role as co-editor of the WSPU's magazine *Votes for Women*, she explicitly encouraged members to adopt the colours at upcoming marches.

"The effect will be very much lost unless the colours are carried out in the dress of every woman in the ranks," she wrote. "You may think that this is a small and trivial matter but there is no service that can be considered as small or trivial in this movement... If every individual in this union would do her part, the colours would become the reigning fashion. And strange as it may seem, nothing would so help to popularise the WSPU."

As well as clothes and banners, Pethick-Lawrence's colour scheme was adopted across a wide range of WSPU logos. Many of these were designed by Sylvia Pankhurst, daughter of the movement's firebrand figurehead, Emmeline. Sylvia, who had studied at the Royal College of Art, used her artistic talents to create a striking visual identity for the campaign – most notably with her trumpeting 'Angel of Freedom' motif. Her designs set the template for the kind of imagery that the movement deployed to represent itself – impassioned yet dignified, youthful, self-assured, progressive and dynamic.

The final puzzle piece of 'brand suffragette' came from Emmeline, who came up



Copying for the cause

WSPU volunteers duplicate propaganda handbills in 1911. Suffragettes soon realised that action as well as information was needed to further their PR campaign

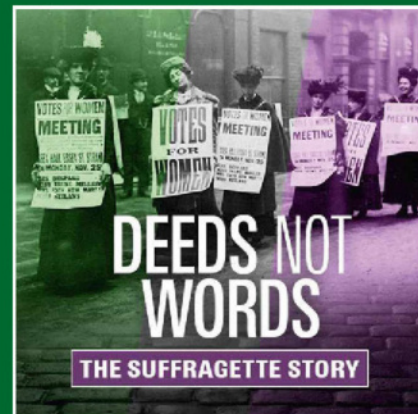
GETTY IMAGES



Sour expression Anti-suffragette postcards such as this 1900 example portrayed campaigners as "desiccated spinsters... whose sexual frustration made them bitter and twisted", says historian Diane Atkinson



DEEDS NOT WORDS: THE SUFFRAGETTE STORY



Ellie spoke to historians Fern Riddell, Jad Adams, Diane Atkinson, June Purvis, Emelyne Godfrey and Sumita Mukherjee for the special *HistoryExtra* podcast series, available now. The series explores in depth how this radical campaign for the vote **shook up Edwardian Britain – from the influence of the Pankhursts to the chaos of the hunger strikes.** Listen now at [historyextra.com/suffragettes-series](https://www.historyextra.com/suffragettes-series)



with the slogan ‘deeds not words’. Here was a clear and catchy motto that could be shouted in the streets – a punchy tagline that would stick in people’s minds and let them know that these women meant business.

“It’s this innovative use of colour and logos that really made the WSPU stand out,” says Atkinson. “I can’t think of any other political organisation that has marketed a campaign as well.”

Once this strong brand identity had been established, it was not only weaponised in the suffragettes’ marketing materials but also emblazoned across a variety of merchandise. Pethick-Lawrence was keenly aware of the need to top up the campaign’s war chest, and selling merchandise offered a powerful way to spread the WSPU’s message while simultaneously bringing in funds.

The power of pageantry

In May 1909, a two-week Women’s Exhibition was held in Knightsbridge, with around 50 stalls for curious visitors to peruse. Alongside a palmistry stand, home-made butterscotch, a mock polling booth and a replica Holloway Prison cell, all manner of branded and colour-coded merchandise was on offer – sales of which contributed substantially to the £5,664 of campaign funds raised.

As the campaign progressed, suffragette shops popped up across the country, many



WSPU china tea sets – like this one, made for a bazaar in Glasgow in 1910 – proved popular among more affluent supporters

The suffragettes had to convince the public that they were not bitter old crones or shrieking banshees

attached to local branches of the WSPU. London alone had 19 WSPU shops, offering desirable items to purchase in person or via mail order. From handkerchiefs and stationery to tote bags and small enamel badges bearing popular slogans, there was something for all budgets.

Working women with minimal disposable income could buy ‘votes for women’ marmalade, chocolate and cigarettes, or glass bead necklaces in purple, white and green. Those with more cash to splash were offered high-end jewellery studded with genuine diamonds and amethysts, or bicycles with chainguards sporting suffragette logos. One of the most popular items was a delicate 13-piece bone china tea set, each cup and saucer bearing Sylvia Pankhurst’s ‘Angel of Freedom’ motif.

Several boardgames were also produced, from Pank-A-Squith – a play on the names of Emmeline Pankhurst and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith (a leading opponent of women’s suffrage) – to the somewhat less opaque Suffragettes In and Out of Prison. The game Suffragetto – of which there is now only one known surviving copy – saw one player controlling police constables while their opponent became the wily suffragettes trying to slink past their defences.

With products such as tea sets and board games, the suffragettes were sneaking their message directly into homes across Britain.

Suffragette activism

But in order for their campaign to achieve tangible results, they also needed to shout that message from the rooftops and see it splashed across the nation's streets.

That's where marching came in. Photographs of suffragette marches taken by Christina Broom capture their forthright spirit and infectious energy, with hand-embroidered banners fluttering in the wind, and marshals on horseback leading a sea of marching women. It's clear from these images that the suffragettes understood the power of spectacle. As WSPU leader Annie Kenney reflected: "Pageantry played a big part in popularising the movement."

These events were also great opportunities to reach potential supporters who were not already sympathetic to the cause. Flyers and suffragette literature would be handed out to onlookers, while catchy popular songs of the time were adapted with suffragette lyrics and accompanied by marching bands.

"Processions were very important when it came to the suffragettes' image, because they showed the public who these women really were," says Atkinson. "That was quite a good reality check, because they weren't the haridans or freaks of nature that those ridiculous postcards portrayed."

Such marches made an impression in even the most unlikely quarters. "I am sure a great many people never realised how young and dainty and elegant and charming most of the leaders of the movement are," a surprised *Daily Mail* reporter admitted in 1908 after one such public event. "And how well they spoke – with what free and graceful gesture; never at a loss for a word or an apt reply to an interruption; calm and collected; forcible, yet so far as I heard, not violent; earnest, but happily humorous as well."

Marches were not the only tactics deployed by the suffragettes to seize public attention. In 1909, Muriel Matters from the Women's Freedom League decorated a dirigible balloon with the words 'Votes for Women' and flew it over London, tossing down a cascade of pro-suffragette pamphlets to the crowds. And in 1913, Ethel Spark and Gertrude Shaw slipped past the guards at the Monument to run a suffragette banner up the flagpole.

One figure who helped to stir up press interest in women's suffrage was aristocratic it-girl turned suffragette Princess Sophia Duleep Singh. As a god-daughter of Queen Victoria, Duleep Singh was well aware of the attention her celebrity status could bring to the cause. So she sold copies of *The Suffragette* newspaper outside her home at Hampton Court Palace, and accosted politicians while wearing a sumptuous fur coat. In one headline-grabbing caper in 1911, bailiffs impounded a seven-stone diamond ring against



Leading from the front

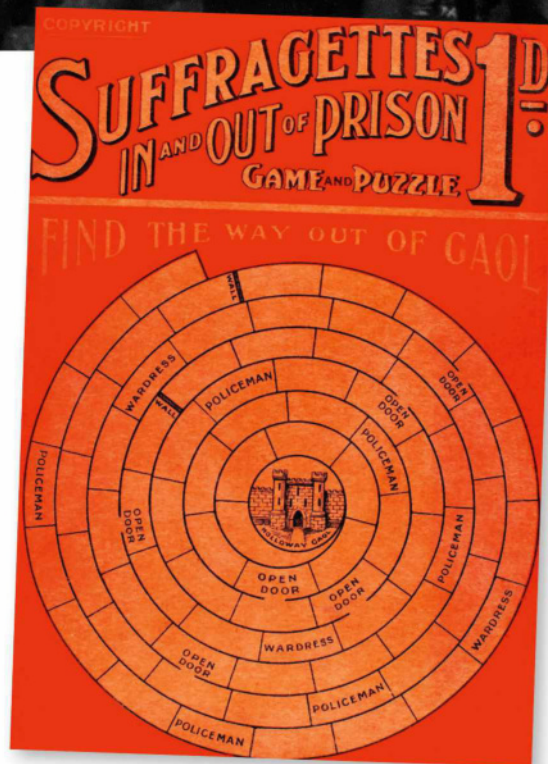
WSPU founder Emmeline Pankhurst (centre) at a 1915 march calling for women to be used in ammunition manufacture. The First World War may have rescued the suffragette movement from reputational oblivion

arrears in rates payments. Comrades from the Women's Tax Resistance League launched a highly publicised protest at the subsequent auction, outbidding the competition to buy back the ring for Sophia.

Courses of action

Stunts often targeted politicians. Suffragettes leapt out at ministers on golf courses, or swapped the flags on greens for others in suffragette colours. In Bristol in 1909, Theresa Garnett shocked reporters when she accosted Winston Churchill with a dog whip at Temple Meads train station. *The Manchester Guardian* lapped up the dramatic story, reporting on the episode as "a very exciting moment", while the *Manchester Evening News* even commissioned an illustration to bring the incident to life for readers.

But as the campaign dragged on, with little sign of political opposition thawing and increased hostility from police and prison officers, suffragette militancy increased. And as the movement became more extreme, so too did the nature of these public actions, escalating from harmless but headline-grabbing stunts to far more



Gaming the system

The WSPU devised and sold a range of products for the home, including this 1908 board game, to simultaneously raise funds for, and awareness of, the suffragette cause

The escalating militant action was a potential public relations disaster for the suffragettes

First World War. By inspiring an immediate cessation of suffragette actions, it prevented the protesters from heading further down a path that would have fuelled yet more hostility to their cause.

"It tells us an awful lot about how political activism works," says Riddell. "The lesson campaigners need to learn from the suffragettes is that if you target ordinary people's lives and put them at risk, your movement will suffer instantly."

Yet, a century on, protesters are still drawing from the suffragette playbook. "I think the suffragette spirit is alive and kicking among lots of protest movements today," says Atkinson. "I'm not sure anybody's done it as well as them, but they have certainly provided a great example for activists and interest groups in the decades since."

Perhaps the best-known example of a modern campaign group borrowing from the suffragette playbook occurred in November 2023, when two members of the climate activism group Just Stop Oil walked into the National Gallery and launched a volley of blows at Diego Velázquez's 'The Rokeby Venus'. The precedent for this attack was clear. Back in 1914, the suffragette Mary Richardson had sparked nationwide outrage by slashing the 'Venus' with a meat cleaver. And, just in case anyone was in any doubt about the inspiration for the climate protesters' attack, they later declared that: "It is time for deeds not words."

The suffragettes' campaign to win the vote may have been at its zenith over a century ago, but their power to make a statement clearly still resonates today. **H**

Ellie Cawthorne is HistoryExtra's podcast editor and presenter of our new series: *Deeds Not Words: The Suffragette Story*

BBC World Service documentary **The Lost World of the Suffragettes** features oral histories: bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p05zfd9f



extreme acts. Letter bombs were sent to the chancellor of the exchequer, David Lloyd George, and explosives were planted in cricket grounds, Westminster Abbey and the London Underground. And in June 1913, Emily Davison died after being struck by King George V's horse as it raced in the Derby – surely the most famous of all suffragette actions.

While the headlines and column inches kept coming, the tenor of the reporting became more hostile to the suffragettes. Any reluctant admiration such as that shown by the *Daily Mail* back in 1908 evaporated, with newspapers instead declaring themselves appalled by so-called 'suffragette outrages'. The old adage 'any publicity is good publicity' began to ring increasingly hollow.

In Riddell's view, the escalating militant action was a potential public relations disaster for the suffragettes. "It's very easy to get distracted by the PR movement, which is one of the reasons why [the suffragettes' campaign] was so successful," she says. "But the shock and horror that women would bomb MPs houses – and lay claim to those bombings – absolutely blew the minds of the British public. It certainly made people far less likely to support the suffragettes, so it was incredibly damaging to the success of the movement as a whole."

Riddell argues that the suffragettes were in many ways rescued from this unfolding reputational nosedive by the outbreak of the

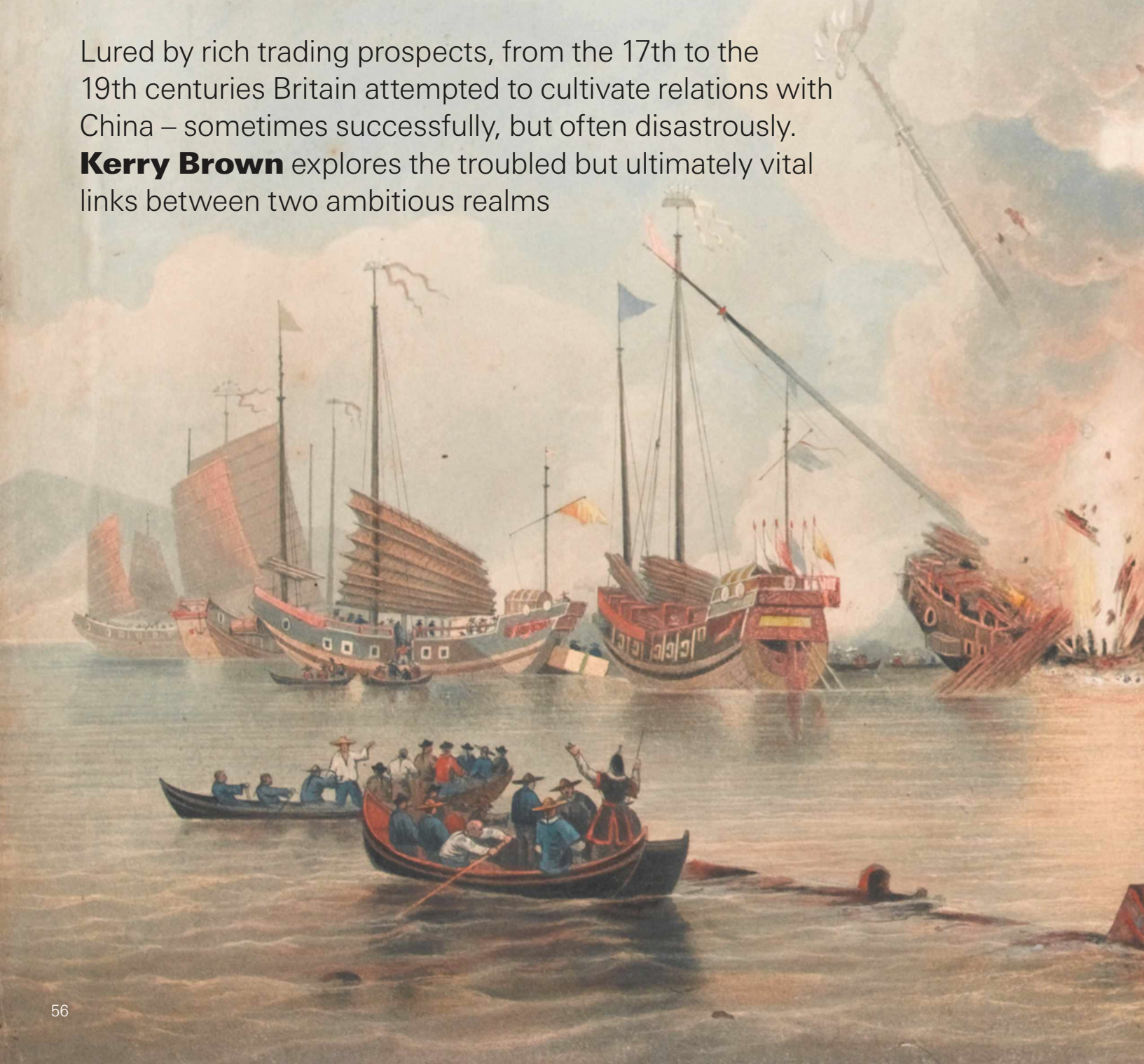


TOP: Princess Sophia Duleep Singh (shown centre, in 1916) lent celebrity status to the suffragette cause
ABOVE: Just Stop Oil activists target 'The Rokeby Venus' in 2023, just as suffragette Mary Richardson had done 109 years earlier

EASTERN PROMISES

Lured by rich trading prospects, from the 17th to the 19th centuries Britain attempted to cultivate relations with China – sometimes successfully, but often disastrously.

Kerry Brown explores the troubled but ultimately vital links between two ambitious realms



Trade wars

The iron steamship *Nemesis* destroys Chinese war junks in 1841, during the First Opium War. Though ostensibly sparked by Chinese responses to drug imports, this was really one of several British attempts to open up trade



China may feel like an exotic destination to many Britons – far distant and undeniably other, culturally and politically. Yet China's influence permeates our daily lives. It was where we originally sourced tea, the first advert for which appeared in London as early as 1658. It was where the technology for making porcelain came from, inspiring the likes of Josiah Wedgwood and Josiah Spode. It was where a huge number of flowers now flourishing in our gardens were first found, collected by botanists and explorers from the 18th century onwards. And it has, of course, produced so much of the technology that today fills and powers our homes.

Often unappreciated and sometimes tucked out of sight, China's contributions to British life today are nonetheless tangible – and largely positive. As these examples show, links between the two nations go back centuries. And, despite the fractious tone of the political relationship today, coloured by arguments about Hong Kong, human rights and espionage, much of that history involved people from both places discovering, appreciating and learning from each other.

The first English efforts to make formal contact with China came during the reign of Elizabeth I, who sent letters to the Chinese imperial court proposing trade.

"We are borne and made to have need one of another, and that we are bound to aide one another," the queen wrote in one missive. None of her letters ever arrived, but China remained on the minds of English traders and merchants. And the East India Company, established in 1599–1600, made launching trade with the far east a key priority.

First contact

One of the earliest recorded incidents between the nations relates to an argument in Bantam, west of what's now Jakarta on the island of Java. A disgruntled trader, Edmund Scott, blamed his Chinese neighbour for a fire that blazed in his warehouse in May 1604. In a horrific description, he recounts how he took hot irons and pincers to the accused man, who nonetheless refused to confess – and was executed. "Between our men and the Hollanders, they shot him almost all to pieces before they left him," Scott declared.

Unfortunately, such violence was the norm in that early era of contact. Britain, seeking new sources of wealth in the 17th and early 18th centuries, was eager to muscle in on the eastern markets and mysterious ancient lands of the Ming and, from 1644, Qing empires. These great realms were known to be places where spices, silk and other great riches might be found. However, China was largely



Planting ideas Chinese workers tend a tea plantation in a mid-19th-century lithograph. Importing leaves from China was expensive – until Scottish botanist Robert Fortune introduced the plants to India



One trader left accounts of people using chopsticks and drinking a strange infusion called "chaa"

closed to outsiders. The only Europeans permitted to work there were Jesuits, and even they were ordered to leave in the 1720s.

Most who engaged with China were not scholars or statespeople but sailors, traders and adventurers who had little time for the niceties of cultural empathy or building trust. In 1637, English captain John Weddell sailed to the south China coast, where he was met with resistance, which turned violent. Eventually, local officials ordered Weddell and his ships to leave and never return. Peter Mundy, a trader and diarist on that voyage, left accounts of people using chopsticks and drinking a strange infusion he called 'chaa' (tea); he also wrote that "there are more people on the water than in the land".

In 1720, Scottish surgeon and diplomat John Bell tagged along with a Russian delegation to "the celestial empire" of Qing. There he encountered a stretch of the Great Wall, reporting that: "Running from one high rock to another, with square towers at



The story of China

Michael Wood revisits key episodes in China's long history at historyextra.com/membership/the-six-ages-of-china



Sinophile statesman

An 1894 *Vanity Fair* caricature of Sir Robert Hart, a former British diplomat who became a powerful figure in the Chinese civil service



Long ruler The Kangxi Emperor, in a portrait created towards the end of his 61-year reign. He was described by one Scottish diplomat as good-natured and affable

certain intervals, even at this distance, [it] is most magnificent." After an audience with the Kangxi Emperor – who had been on the Chinese throne for almost six decades since 1661, when he was just six years old – Bell commented on "the good nature and affability of this ancient monarch".

In the mid-18th century, East India Company merchants were finally allowed to conduct business in China, but in only one place: the port of Canton, today's Guangzhou, on the Pearl river delta in the far south near Hong Kong. The British were frustrated by this restriction, because the goods they felt would be most worthwhile trading in China – woollen garments – were more suitable to the distant northern regions, and not so readily saleable in the balmy south.

In 1759, James Flint was sent on an illegal mission to Qing authorities in Tianjin, aiming to get restrictions lifted to allow British merchants to trade in other locations in China. He delivered a translation of his

request to government offices – an act that was viewed dimly by Chinese authorities. Flint was arrested, sent back to Canton, imprisoned in Macau for three years and then ordered to leave the country, never to return. It could have been worse; the Chinese man who translated his request was executed.

Clearly, dialogue in those early decades of contact and trade was not always straightforward. But the enquiring nature of some Britons drove them to seek pathways into even the most remote areas.

Having heard reports of trade possibilities with Tibet, then essentially under the control of Qing China, in 1774 Warren Hastings, governor-general of Bengal, despatched a young Scottish official, George Bogle, to investigate. Bogle's wonderful account provides a superb example of benevolent curiosity, cultural understanding and empathy. He wondered, for example, at the system of polyandry – in which a woman may have several husbands – practised by the Tibetans: men,

he commented, "club together in matrimony as merchants do in trade". He also built a warm relationship with the Panchen Lama – the second most senior religious leader in Tibet, after the Dalai Lama – who promised to intercede for the British on an imminent visit to Beijing. The mission achieved some limited and temporary commercial gains, but it was another century and a quarter before Britain finally gained trading access to Tibet – using force, not diplomacy, during the British expedition of 1903/04.

Clash of civilisations

By the end of the 18th century, Britain was importing vast quantities of tea from China. At first, most was sourced from secondary markets; it was heavily taxed, and smuggling was rife, so more formal connections were needed. In the 1780s, prime minister Pitt the Younger asked his chief confidant, Henry Dundas, to arrange the first-ever government-led mission to China. An initial

attempt in 1788 under Charles Allan Cathcart ended prematurely when he died soon after his ship left Britain. Then, in 1792, George Macartney – formerly an ambassador to the Russian court of Catherine the Great and a colonial governor in India – was selected to lead another delegation. He set off with a fleet of ships, one of them laden with gifts to impress the Chinese.

Macartney's mission marked one of the great moments of modern history. Described by some as a clash of civilisations, it brought the world's fastest-industrialising and modernising country face to face with one of the oldest continuous cultures. Macartney was joined by William Alexander, an artist from Kent who produced beautiful sketches of the Chinese coast, and George Staunton, whose young son learned Chinese over the course of the mission and charmed the Qianlong Emperor with a few words in Mandarin. Botanists and scientists were also on board.

Macartney's venture failed in its main aim – opening up trade across China. But it did accrue a vast amount of knowledge about a realm the British had been trying to penetrate for almost two centuries, but about which they understood little. Macartney was just one of several men who wrote accounts about the trip. Another complained bitterly about the food, much like grumbling tourists today do worldwide. Some were amazed by Chinese architecture: the account of the overland journey back from Beijing to Canton by John Barrow, Macartney's secretary, includes

descriptions of the Porcelain Tower of Nanjing and the old bridges of Suzhou. Indeed, the antiquity of China impressed many.

The language and writing, so different from European scripts, represented another source of fascination. Members of the Royal Society tasked the Macartney delegation with trying to establish whether Chinese was similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics – an idea that had first surfaced in a 1660s work claiming Noah's Ark had landed in China after the biblical floods.

British understanding of Chinese languages was improved hugely thanks to the work of the greatest sinologist Britain has ever produced. Robert Morrison was a Protestant missionary sent to China in 1807 to convert the so-called 'heathens' to Christianity, but he proved more successful in linguistics. He compiled the first Chinese-to-English dictionary, published from 1815, then translated the Bible into Chinese. These extraordinary achievements were, of course, possibly only in collaboration with Chinese people who helped him despite stern edicts forbidding such cooperation.

Familiarity breeds contempt

Morrison's work demonstrated the potential for a deeper kind of understanding and appreciation of China. Yet the century that followed reinforced the old adage: familiarity tended to breed contempt rather than deeper affinity. In the second half of the 18th century, Britain had been in the thrall of all things Chinese, from wallpaper to building design; a new word, 'chinoiserie', was even coined to describe such fashions. That fascination was then replaced by a view of China as a backward country – buried in tradition, isolated from the wider world and unwilling to engage. This perception of a fading empire was reinforced by the writing of John Barrow, who had been attached to the first British embassy to China. He suggested sourly in his 1804 account that it was a nation "worn out with old age and disease".

Still, Britain made efforts to grow closer to China, in 1834 sending its first formal representative, the unfortunate Lord Napier, appointed chief superintendent of trade at Canton. At the time, the relationship between China and Britain was largely dominated by traders such as Scotsmen William Jardine and James Matheson, who gleefully set out to exploit the opportunity that opened up when the East India Company's monopoly on British-Chinese trade was ended in 1833. Napier proved unpopular with the British residents in China, who felt that he was too soft on the locals, but also the Chinese, who resolutely opposed his attempts to speak not just to the designated traders but also to



officials directly. His situation was typical of those experienced by many emissaries and diplomats since then. Napier was turfed out of Canton only a few months after his arrival, and died soon afterwards.

It wasn't long before Sino-British relations deteriorated into full-scale conflict. Known to the Chinese as the Opium Wars, these were in fact not primarily about the drug, though vast quantities were being imported into China from India by the British with the aim of correcting the trade imbalance created by the export of tea and other goods.

The first war, fought 1839–42, was sparked by the arrival in Canton of an assertive official, Lin Zexu, sent from Beijing – to the horror of Napier's successor, Charles Elliot. Lin's mandate was to stop the contraband trade in opium, and he proceeded to impound goods, imprison foreign merchants associated with the trade, and generally rid the country of what was regarded as a debilitating scourge.

Plenty of people in Britain were sympathetic to this Chinese response to the trade. These included William Gladstone, who made a rousing speech in the House of Commons defending the Chinese for their actions.

Elliot himself was dismissed for what was perceived as a lack of aggression and decisiveness. His dispatches from the final weeks of his time in post often acknowledged



Artistic vision A young woman of Hong Kong, painted c1846 by George Chinnery, who spent more than two and a half decades in China producing evocative portraits and landscapes



Clash of empires

British soldiers storm a Chinese fort during the Second Opium War. The weakened Qing empire ceded territory to Britain as a result

that, in some respects at least, the Chinese may have had the right to take the actions they did. However, Britain had the will – and the means – to gain what it wanted. That, in the end, dictated everything else.

This war – really a series of skirmishes that ended in total victory for Britain, thanks to the superiority of its military technology and navy – left a searing mark on the Chinese. It is remembered in China today as the start of the so-called ‘century of humiliation’.

The Treaty of Nanjing that ended the war achieved the real aims of figures such as the British foreign secretary, Viscount Palmerston. Their concerns were not so much about the drug trade per se, but the general lack of access for British business in China; barriers preventing foreign officials from speaking directly to the Chinese government; and, primarily, the sense that Britain’s status as a great power was not being recognised by China. As well as addressing these issues, the treaty ceded Hong Kong to the British.

Key figures

British involvement in China reached its peak in the mid-19th century, an era encapsulated in the actions of three figures. The first was maverick botanist Robert Fortune, who was involved in perhaps the most audacious act of intellectual property theft ever committed.

Precious goods

A fashion for all things Chinese swept Europe in the second half of the 18th century. Examples include this French ‘chinoiserie’ furnishing fabric (right) and decorated enamelled vase produced in London, c1750

Masquerading as a Chinese traveller, in the 1850s he stole tea plants and devised a way to grow them in British-run India – which is why so much tea drunk in Britain today originates from India.

The second key character at that time was the strange mystic Charles Gordon, who had participated in the looting of the Summer Palace by British and French forces in 1860, during the Second Opium War. He turned up again in 1863 to lead a group of foreign mercenaries, nicknamed the Ever Victorious Army, during the so-called Taiping Rebellion, a civil war that had been convulsing the country for 13 years.

The third of these influential British figures, Robert Hart, achieved a different kind of fame. From 1863, he ran the Imperial Maritime Customs – a unique system responsible not just for collecting import duties for the Chinese government, but also for establishing infrastructure such as lighthouses and for collecting statistics. Hart, the highest-ranking British person to serve as a Chinese official, maintained that position till 1911, by which time he was responsible for close to a third of the Qing’s revenue.



Just as Britain has been influenced by these interactions, so too was China. It was introduced to key technologies, belief systems and processes of modernity, from railways to ideas around administration and finance, largely through British companies, officials or individuals. Neither country would be the kind of place it is today without these three centuries of early engagement. That needs to be more widely recognised today, particularly in a time when there are such sharp disagreements between the two over values, rights and ideas of global order.

The situation changed as China became open on the world stage throughout the 20th century. The US, Japan and other powers grew more influential, and Britain’s role slowly receded. Hong Kong became the key focus, with colonial rule there maintained till 1997. Yet even today, in the 21st century, China ranks as among Britain’s largest and most important trading and economic partners. As we’ve seen, links between the two go back centuries – and their impacts on one another have been profound. ■

Britain had been in the thrall of all things Chinese, from wallpaper to building design

Kerry Brown is professor of Chinese studies at King’s College London. His latest book, *The Great Reversal: Britain, China and the 400-Year Contest for Power*, was published by Yale in July

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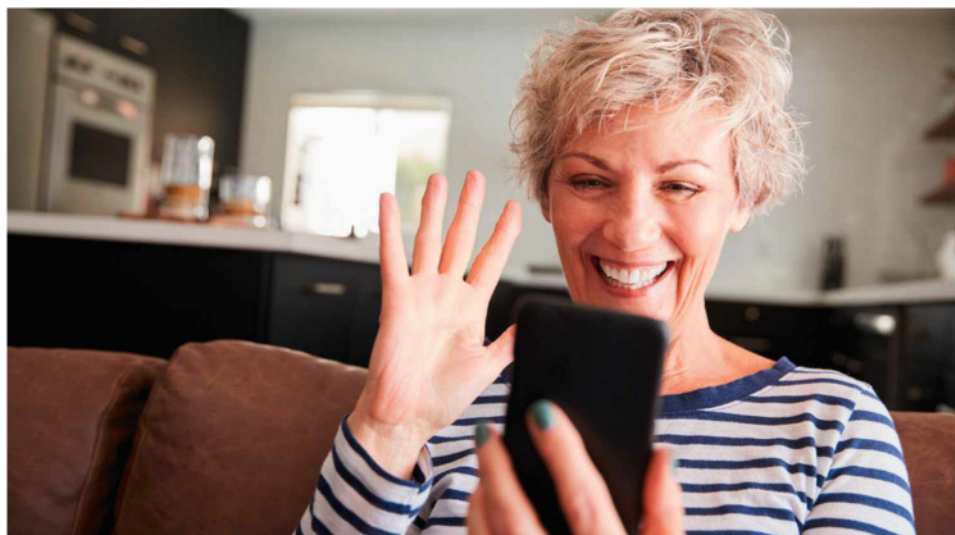
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Fighting fit An English fleet defeats the French at the battle of Sluys in 1340. By now, Edward III's war machine was reaping the benefits of a system of national taxation, approved by parliament

Medieval England's political miracle

From Magna Carta to parliament, taxation to the law courts, the 13th and 14th centuries laid the foundations for the modern British state

BY **CAROLINE BURT** AND **RICHARD PARTINGTON**

Good. But could do better. That was the message that the English people conveyed to their all-conquering monarch at the height of the Hundred Years' War. In 1358, England's great warrior-king

Edward III asked parliament if he should accept a peace treaty he'd negotiated with the French, following a series of dramatic military victories. Parliament emphatically advised the king to fight again. Too much blood had been shed and too much treasure expended. The French, MPs declared, were not offering enough.

For Edward's distant predecessor King John, such a scenario would have been unthinkable.

Then, at the dawn of the 13th century, there was no notion of shared national enterprise around foreign policy. The English king's lands in France were a matter for the king alone – not for the community of the realm expressing its will through parliament. The people, if they had been courageous enough to venture their opinions to John, would have been told – not so politely – to keep their noses out.

It was also unimaginable during John's reign that other matters that parliament routinely considered in Edward III's day – issues such as how much tax people paid, and the way in which law and justice was dispensed to the masses – might be a matter of nationwide debate.

Yet the 150 or so years between John's reign and Edward's victories over the French witnessed the utter transformation of the English state. This extraordinary period saw the introduction of a system of national taxation by consent, and the advent of the forum that approved that tax: parliament. It saw the legal system grow exponentially and a network of royal officers being appointed across the land. It saw striking advances in military organisation, including the professionalisation of the army. And, of course, it saw the introduction of Magna Carta, which established the much-cherished principle that the king was subject to the same law as his subjects.

Today we think of the 13th and 14th centuries as a period of protracted warfare and plague. It was undoubtedly both those things. But it was also the period that laid the foundations for many elements of the English, and by extension British, state as we know it today. So why did this transformation happen? And who were the main drivers behind this change?

When John became king in 1199, it is doubtful that he gave any thought to these grand questions of statehood. That's partly because the concept of the

state as we know it did not exist. But it's mainly because John had far more urgent concerns occupying his in-tray. He had to fend off a rival claim to the throne of England from his nephew Arthur, and he had to get to grips with a major assault launched by his great French rival, King Philip II.

Philip was determined to assert himself, and that meant seizing lands held in France by John. Those English possessions stretched far across France, from Normandy in the north to Aquitaine in the south-west – a block much larger than the territory directly controlled by the French king.

Unfortunately for John, Philip was not only hugely ambitious but also vastly capable, and in 1204 the French king seized the jewel in the English crown, Normandy, shortly followed by many of the other English territories in France.

The key moment in this English debacle was the loss of Château Gaillard, Richard the Lionheart's extraordinary defensive system on the cliffs of the Seine at Les Andelys. Richard had declared that the walls of this mighty castle could hold out against the French even had they been made of butter. John's manifold deficiencies as both a king and a military commander proved his older brother decisively wrong.

The loss of Normandy in 1204 was a shattering blow. But it was also a turning point in English history: for it prompted a chain reaction that would lead to Magna Carta. Determined to regain his territories, John returned to England to regroup. Over the following decade, he raised vastly more money in England than any of his predecessors, money he used to build continental alliances and fund a new military expedition to France.

Funds flowed into the royal coffers through fines levied by the king on members of the nobility. These were extorted with threats, violence and the sale of justice to the highest bidder – and triggered a wave of resentment across the realm. John is rightly seen as one of England's cruellest kings. According to one chronicler, he violated the wives and daughters of his nobles; in the words of another, he roasted French prisoners of war on tripods and gridirons.

The unfairness and brutality of all this was not lost on England's barons, who, as the wealthiest subjects, bore the brunt of John's impositions. If the common law – which since 1166 had offered all men and women cheap access to royal justice – dictated that the barons could not abuse, bribe and extort their fellow countrymen without facing

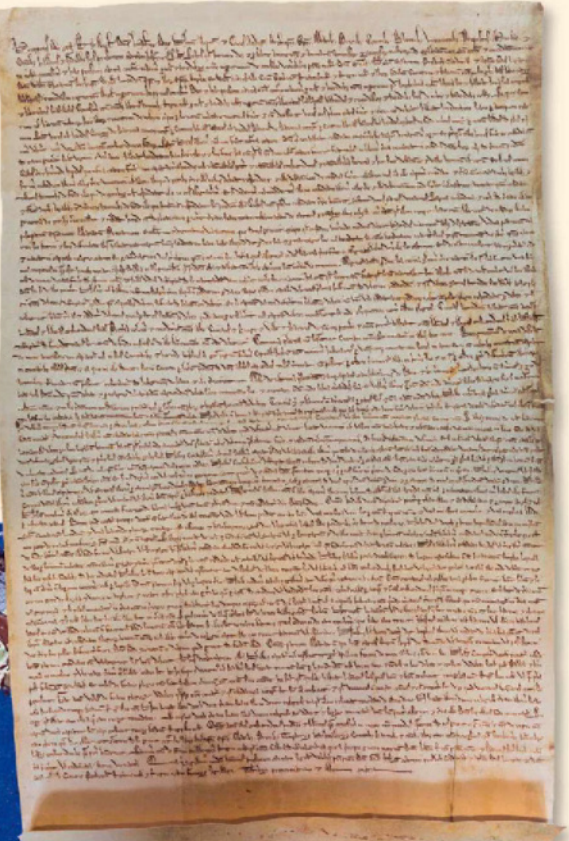


Edward III, shown in a 15th-century miniature, sought parliament's agreement before striking a treaty with the French

“The loss of Normandy was a shattering blow but it triggered a chain reaction that would lead to Magna Carta



Restraining order A copy of the 1217 edition of Magna Carta, housed in Hereford Cathedral. The barons' attempts to place the king under the same laws as his subjects transformed the English state



How the mighty have fallen A 14th-century depiction of the French siege of the English fortress of Château Gaillard. King John's loss of this formidable defensive system on the banks of the Seine in 1204 was a low point in his hapless reign



Riding into trouble King John shown on a hunting expedition in a 14th-century manuscript. The tactics that the monarch employed to raise money for his war in France sparked a firestorm of resentment



Power to the people Edward I presides over parliament, as shown in a manuscript. During the king's reign, this institution was extended to include a 'Commons' representing all localities in the country

legal action, then why, they asked, should the king be allowed to do it?

And so, when John's ambitions to regain lost territory came crashing down with military defeat in 1214, his opponents in England lost no time in demanding change. In Magna Carta, literally the 'Great Charter', they attempted to put an end, one by one, to all the questionable practices of their king. While John fought the rebels with all his might, his death in 1216, and the accession of his son as Henry III during a civil war that showed little sign of leading to any lasting settlement, meant that no government could hope to move forward in peace without compromise. That compromise was the confirmation of Magna Carta.

By placing kings under the same law as their subjects, Magna Carta made it impossible for future monarchs to raise money for war arbitrarily. Doing so would bring political crisis, as Henry III discovered when, in an echo of his father, he began to threaten the landed property of his barons.

It soon became abundantly clear that if the king wanted to defend his lands, he would have to find a new way of raising the money he required – one that involved accessing his subjects' wealth in a legitimate manner. It was this imperative that led to the introduction of a national system of taxation by consent – and, in the 1230s, the emergence of the body that would grant (or refuse) such consent: parliament.

Parliament took its name from the French *Parlement*, 'the place of discussion', and true to that name, it soon became an arena for national debate on all areas of public policy. It was initially the exclusive domain of the very rich and powerful. But, by the end of the 13th century, a wider cross-section of the population was contributing to that debate. In 1258, when political crisis erupted in the face of Henry III's unpopular foreign and financial policies, demands were made that angry knights, as well as disaffected barons, should be represented. This broader social representation was extended again during the reign of Edward I. In the 14th century, parliament came to consist of Lords and Commons, just as it does today – the latter elected to represent all the localities in the country.

Under Edward, a partnership was established with parliament that led to repeated grants of taxation to support the king in wars in Wales, Scotland and France. This practice – of the crown co-opting the resources of the realm to royal military imperatives – led to a developing sense that foreign policy was not merely dynastic but national, in the interests of the entire country. By the time Edward I's grandson Edward III was striding across Europe with aplomb in the mid-14th century, his subjects in parliament were fully engaged in consultation with the king, his ministers and judges on all aspects of national government.

National taxation, approved by parliament, produced



A 14th-century depiction of Richard II meeting rebels during the Peasants' Revolt. War and pandemic shaped the relationship between the people and their rulers

predictable and reliable war finance that enabled England to professionalise its army under Edward I and particularly Edward III. This enabled England to punch well above its weight internationally until the mid-15th century, most especially in the first half of the Hundred Years' War with France. The battles of Crécy in 1346 and Poitiers in 1356 respectively saw the English destroy the French field army and capture the French king, John II.

At the naval battle of Sluys in 1340, thousands of French soldiers drowned, fleeing English men-at-arms and archers charging across their decks. This was the English realm in its military pomp, producing arguably the country's most significant naval triumph until Trafalgar in 1805. "How do we know that French knights are braver than English knights?" asked a jester of his master, the French king Philip VI, in the aftermath of Sluys. When Philip failed to provide an answer, the jester gave the sardonic reply: "Because English knights are afraid to jump into the sea."

Government, too, was growing increasingly sophisticated. The common law was in such demand that the courts struggled to keep up with the volume of business. The people of England were clearly hungry for the impartial, enforceable and centrally recorded justice provided by this ever-growing national legal system. Kings added to the pressure themselves because they regularly commissioned nationwide enquiries into crime and corruption. Edward I created so much legislation during his 35-year-reign that he was later called the English Justinian, after the famous law-giving Roman emperor.

Such extensive legislating required a new professional cadre of judges, attorneys and justices of the peace. Government co-opted so many of the king's subjects into its work that it is estimated that, by the mid-14th century, some 40 per cent of male house-holders were involved in some way – as sheriffs,

“The common law was in such demand that courts struggled to keep up with the volume of business



Royal restart Charles III and Queen Camilla at the state opening of parliament, 2023. The seat of British democracy grew into a force to be reckoned with in the late Middle Ages

jurors, constables, military recruiters, purveyors of supplies and tax collectors.

England was hardly alone in all of this. Rapidly evolving ideas about the authority of the king as lawgiver were mirrored across Europe. Monarchs from Louis IX of France to the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II embarked upon vast legislative programmes. In Iberia, Alfonso X of Castile ordered the compilation of law codes into a document, *La Siete Partidas*, that remains celebrated today.

The 13th-century rediscovery in Europe of Aristotle's work added another flavour to this. Influenced by the ancient Greek philosopher's ideas, writers began to see government as a force for good, not simply a necessary evil. Kings and their subjects eagerly embraced these ideas, both to claim power and to demand accountability.

Yet not all nations experienced this thirst for power and accountability in the same way. In England, the quest for the common good was put under intense pressure by conflict and mass death. War in France and across the British Isles drove political change – and brought with it significant disorder. In the early 14th century, during a break in hostilities, demobbed soldiers formed armed bands that marauded across England, leaving a trail of outrages in their wake. That prompted one of the biggest enquiries into crime that had yet taken place in England – the so-called 'trailbaston' commissions.

Pandemic also shattered society's sense of security. The Black Death, which first hit England in 1348 and re-appeared in several waves, killed at least 40 per cent of the population, forcing government to intervene to regulate the labour market. The Statute of Labourers of 1351

sought to constrain wage growth and labour mobility, as workers exploited their scarcity to demand higher pay and move to better paid jobs.

Those in the upper echelons of society were clearly disturbed by this new thirst for social mobility. We can see this in the Sumptuary Law of 1363, which stipulated that the lower orders should not dress in clothes above their station. Such enforced restraint was hugely controversial, and the combination of a surprisingly buoyant economy and fierce opposition meant that the laws were widely ignored.

“War and plague drove political change across this period – and triggered upheaval and disorder

What no one could ignore, however, was the crisis that struck the economy in the early 1370s. The fall-out from the financial downturn – caused by a collapse in prices, for reasons historians do not fully understand – was long and ultimately bloody. In the immediate aftermath, peasants experienced a double whammy of the sudden enforcement of earlier labouring legislation and the imposition of the first poll tax. Anger and resentment simmered away until, in 1381, they exploded in the popular uprising known as the Peasants' Revolt.

It took the authorities just a few months to put down the revolt, but not before the rebels had chopped off the heads of two of the most powerful men in the land – the archbishop of Canterbury and the lord high treasurer – and reduced the Savoy Palace, John of Gaunt's opulent residence on the Thames, to a smouldering ruin. At the height of the uprising, the king himself – Richard II – felt compelled to ride out to Smithfield to listen to the rebels' demands.

Richard II survived his encounter with the peasants but it was a mere stay of execution. Like King John before him, Richard was a weak, negligent and ultimately tyrannical ruler. And like John, his reign ended in ignominy, deposed by his cousin Henry Bolingbroke in 1399. Yet there was a crucial difference – one that signals just how far the tectonic plates of the English state had shifted over the two centuries between the reigns of these hapless rulers.

John's downfall occurred in the midst of a chaotic war in which a tiny cadre of the most powerful men in the land sought to limit the power of the king on behalf of 'the community of the realm'. When Bolingbroke ousted Richard II, he presented deposition articles for the approval of a packed parliament of Lords and Commons gathered from across the kingdom. Where John had failed his dynasty, Richard had failed the entire English nation. ■

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Caroline Burt and Richard Partington are the authors of *Arise, England: Six Kings and the Making of the English State*, which was published by Faber & Faber in April

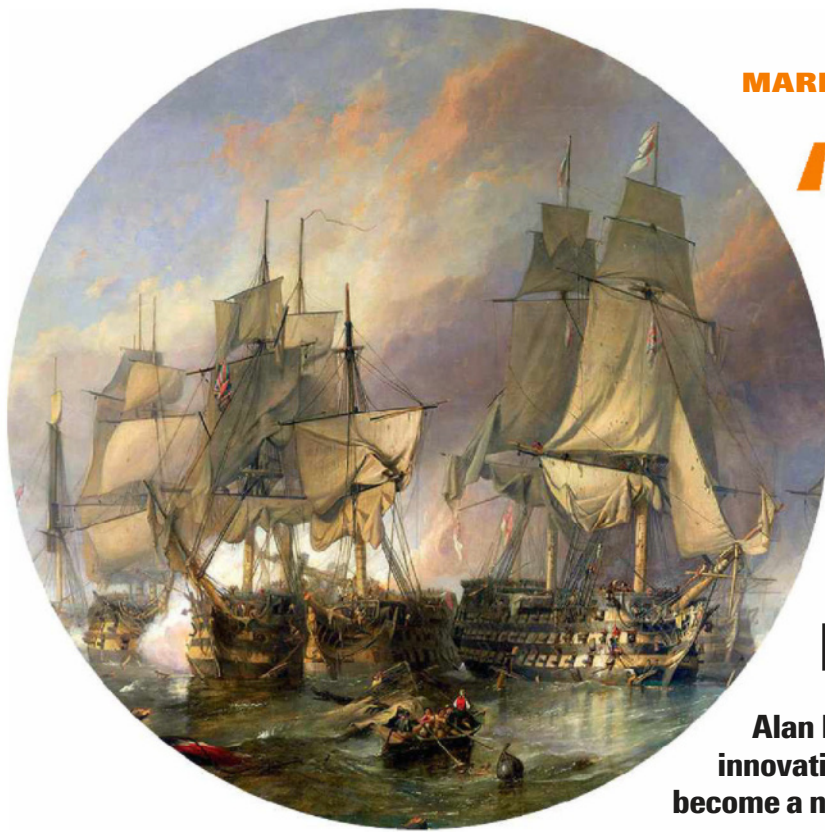
BIOGRAPHY

“It is a miracle that she is remembered at all, let alone that she should be the subject of such an erudite book”

Roger Moorhouse on an engaging profile of a Polish princess > page 74



BOOKS



MARITIME HISTORY

// The pathfinder corps established in the years after the Napoleonic Wars would provide the intelligence needed to coordinate Britain's empire //

Alan Forrest enjoys a look at a key innovation in the nation's quest to become a naval powerhouse > page 76

THE ROYALS

“Written with verve and authority, the book has a delightful dash of gossipy Whistledown about it”

Joanne Paul praises an evocative tour of Britain's palaces and their people > page 77

ANCIENT GREECE

“Oswyn Murray explores how perspectives on Greek history have changed over the past three centuries”

Edith Hall rates a book charting the enduring influence of the ancient world > page 78

INTERVIEW

Alice Loxton chronicles the teenage years of great figures from the past > page 70



"People have achieved all kinds of crazy things at the age of 18"

ALICE LOXTON talks to Danny Bird about her book on 18 individuals who left an indelible mark on British history – before they were out of their teens

Danny Bird: Your book explores the lives of 18 figures from across more than 1,000 years of British history, viewing each of them as an 18-year-old. Where did you find the inspiration for this book? And did it prompt you to reflect on your own life at the age of 18?

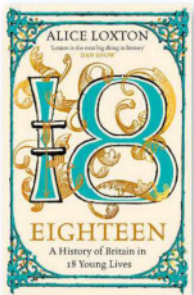
Alice Loxton: The idea for *Eighteen* came when I was walking around the National Portrait Gallery in London. Typically, images there show figures from history depicted in later life or in the years of their success. While looking at these portraits of grown-ups, I loved pondering the idea that, once upon a time, they were teenagers, with all the hopes, fears, passions and dreams that adolescents have. So I wanted to shine a light on younger people throughout history. We are living in this wonderful moment at which different groups of people from history are being highlighted, but I don't know if the 18-year-old age group has ever really been discussed in this way.

When I was 18, my life was straightforward. I finished school, then I was applying to university. That's probably quite familiar to lots of people today. It's interesting that, during the 20th century, most people's lives generally became much more similar, with 18 coming to mark the beginning of adulthood. By contrast, some of the experiences people had at that age further back in history were pretty extreme. I suppose that my 18-year-old self feels quite distant from them.

How did you choose these 18 historical figures?

It was difficult – like that question: "Which famous people would you invite to your dream dinner party?" Ultimately, I chose figures to whom I am personally drawn. These are the people who, if I were watching the *Great British Bake Off* on TV, I would invite over to watch with me.

They are also reflective of lots of different aspects of Britain's story, with geographical diversity and a mix of experiences and backgrounds. Some of my characters are royals who go off and do incredible things. Some come from very ordinary backgrounds and undergo rags-to-riches transformations. Others have fame thrust upon them – such as Fionnghal nic Dhòmhnaill [Flora MacDonald], who had this crazy event happen to her [helping Bonnie Prince Charlie flee Scotland after the battle of Culloden]. Other figures are much more instrumental in forging their own path.



Eighteen: A History of Britain in 18 Young Lives

by Alice Loxton
(Macmillan,
336 pages, £22)

Today, the age of 18 is widely perceived as the end of childhood and the 'switching on' of responsibility. Has that always been the case?

It's interesting, because today at the age of 18 you become an adult according to the law. It's this *thing* when you instantly change overnight and you're perceived as a completely different person, both by society and in an official way. But of course that wasn't always the case. Looking back at history, it's clear that 18 is a totally random age.

I wanted to examine what it means to be 18 today by looking back at more than a thousand years of experiences of people of that age group. Studying that cross section, you realise that people have achieved all kinds of crazy things at that age over the course of history.

Individuals in the past tended to have had much greater responsibility by their 18th birthday. In some cases, they also endured immense hardships. The experiences are just very different and, I think, can also reveal one's potential. Those who are given an enormous amount of responsibility at that young age tend to shine. So it's interesting to look at 18-year-olds today, and to ask whether we underestimate them.

Do you have a favourite historical personality among the individuals championed in your book?

The one I really liked writing about was Mary Anning. There's something quite strange about her: she's really cool, and her story is unbelievable. She was born on the south coast, in Dorset, and she became incredibly famous for collecting fossils: by the time she was 18, she was known as an authority on them. She'd come from a very poor background and had no formal education. But she walked along the coast and studied the natural world around her: she took time to look and look and look, to turn over the stones and to be considerate.

I find that inspiring in itself, but Anning's 'origin story' is exciting, too. Before she was born, her parents had lost a young daughter in tragic circumstances. That little girl was near the stove in the kitchen in their house on the seafront in Lyme Regis; she caught fire and was burned to death. It's a horrific story, but that kind of accident appears to have been surprisingly common at that time. When I was researching Anning in the British Newspaper Archive, accounts of this type of incident numbered in the thousands.

Anning was born not long after that tragedy, in 1799. And there's another remarkable story. On a really hot day in August 1800, the townsfolk gathered to watch a travelling band of horsemen; the infant Mary was there with a family friend. Suddenly, a terrible storm broke out; accounts record it as the most dramatic thing people present had ever seen. During the storm, lightning struck a tree under which three women were sheltering – one of whom was holding little baby Mary.



PROFILE

Alice Loxton is a historian, presenter and author. Her previous book is *UPROAR! Satire, Scandal and Printmakers in Georgian London* (Icon Books, 2023)

PHOTOGRAPH BY
JENI NOTT

All three women were killed. Believing Mary dead, the Annings bathed her in warm water – and she revived. Somehow, against the odds, she had survived. Later, people said that she had a sixth sense – that she could look around her and see this ancient world, gleaning insights into how the Earth was formed. Maybe there was something in that flash of lightning, but in any case I found her life to be poetic.

You've dedicated the book to "every 18-year-old out there".

Do you think that any of the experiences of your historical personalities will resonate with 18-year-olds today?

Yes, definitely! But I also want the book to be for readers of all ages. I hope it helps people, even those who are much older, to reconnect with their 18-year-old selves. There's this optimistic spirit you have when you're 18 that I've identified in the book. It's this moment of uncertainty – even insecurity – but also an age at which everything's to play for: the world's your oyster in some ways.

Consider Sarah Biffen, who was born in Somerset in the Georgian period, without arms and with only vestigial legs. We might assume that, growing up with that condition in a very poor family, her life would have been quite difficult. Yet Biffen was so determined. Hers is an amazingly inspiring story: she became an incredible artist, producing some of the greatest miniature paintings of the age. Her artwork was collected by royalty and admired by the rich and famous.

An exhibition at the Philip Mould Gallery in London recently celebrated her work, which is enjoying a bit of a revival today. But what were the chances that a poor girl from Somerset who was born with that condition would go on to become one of the greatest artists of the period? It's the kind of story that I hope will resonate with young people who endure and endeavour in lots of different ways.

Life expectancy was, for most people, much lower throughout history. Would it be fair to say that the past was a more youthful place than the Britain of 2024?

Obviously, people tended to die at a much younger age than they do today – but did that mean they perceived themselves as middle-aged



A coloured engraving of Sarah Biffen, who, having been born without arms, learned to paint using her mouth and became a celebrated miniaturist in Georgian Britain

Until the late Victorian period, children were essentially treated as adults as soon as they could walk, contributing to their family's income //

when they were in their twenties, say? Geoffrey Chaucer said that a woman approaching her thirties was "winter forage". So I look forward to that!

In the past, there were a lot more young people around, in positions of responsibility. There were old people too, of course, but they weren't such a large chunk of the population as they are today. Therefore, lots of individuals in positions of power as well as people with responsibility – those leading families, even parents – were much younger.

A medieval prince leading an army into battle would be respected even though he might have been just 15 years old. Indeed, older people would have respected someone who was a teenager in a position of authority. The association of maturity with power and deserving respect is a very recent thing.

In the late 18th century, one of Britain's most successful prime ministers, William Pitt the Younger, became prime minister at the age of just 24. Although he was mocked at the time, many of his contemporaries also achieved a great deal in their youth. Some of Britain's most beloved poets died young, too – John Keats in his twenties and Lord Byron in his thirties, for example.

Our perception of young people has transformed in the past 120 years or so. Until the late Victorian period, children were essentially treated as adults as soon as they could walk, and would contribute to their family's income – a situation that started to change only in the late 19th century when schooling began to become the norm for most people.

Gradually, the age at which compulsory formal education ended rose. Nowadays, we have 'young adults' who are in school and not working full-time, but who might have some money to spend. That phenomenon really emerged in the 1950s, along with a commercial strategy marketing products to this new demographic, 'the teenager'. Although I often talk about 'teenage history' and teenagers in the past, the idea of the teenager is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Were there any dubious 18-year-olds from Britain's past who didn't make the cut?

I really wanted this to be a very inspiring book – whether you're almost 18, you are currently 18, or you're much older. Of course, there are some people I thought would be interesting to look at but wouldn't wish to encourage people to emulate. For instance, it would have been fascinating to look at Guy Fawkes as a young boy from York. How did he end up becoming a terrorist of sorts?

You could say that this book presents a rose-tinted view of Britain's past. These are my favourites, so it doesn't focus on the 'baddies', as it were. Although some – such as Elizabeth I and Empress Matilda – were extremely wealthy people and may be unrepresentative of wider society, you get a sense that even those at the very top had the same fears, anxieties, passions and drive as everybody else.

The constant in history is that the human condition doesn't change very much. We all share doubts to varying degrees, and we all long for love and comfort and belonging. That's true wherever you are and whichever century you're living in.



Testaments of youth

You can hear an extended version of this interview on our podcast soon: historyextra.com/podcast



Digging for prehistory A bronze statue of fossil-collector Mary Anning, installed in Lyme Regis in 2022. Though born into a poor family, by the age of 18 the self-taught palaeontologist was already renowned for her work

Would you say that those moments of vulnerability and naivety have had an impact on the way history has panned out, or even in the way we view the past by interpreting those traits?

Those teenage years aren't the showreel of people's lives – they're the messy bits, the behind-the-scenes moments when we're figuring things out. But they are also when character is forged. People who have had it all, and for whom everything's been easy, don't tend to come out quite as determined, driven or wise.

Vivienne Westwood is an excellent example. She grew up in the village of Tintwistle, in the Peak District. There was no reason to imagine that she would build a great career as a fashion designer. She had an amazing art teacher who encouraged her to go to art school, but her gnawing self-doubt – a result of her working-class background – compelled her to drop out. She just felt it wasn't realistic, and convinced herself that it was silly to follow this frivolous dream. So she went a different way: she got married and embarked on a steady career as a primary school teacher. It was only later that she fully embraced her creative side, though she always knew it was within her.

Her 18-year-old self was full of doubt – she wasn't confident enough to follow her dreams when it didn't seem plausible to do so. That's not surprising when one considers the society and the situation in which she was raised. Nevertheless, it's incredible that someone who became perhaps the greatest fashion designer in British history – indeed, one of the world's greats – was so full of doubt at that young age.

I think that's one of the stories that will resonate with lots of young people as well as older readers. It might seem so implausible that you could also become someone so successful – a household name. But try to imagine that, once upon a time, Vivienne Westwood was just a young girl, not knowing what would happen.

Despite her misgivings, though, she always had something about her. She was creative and driven from a young age, and all of the things that became her strengths in later life were present when she was a child. In hindsight, the clues were there; the question was whether she was going to get to a point where she could use her skills.

Looking at this idea from an alternative perspective, did any one of the 18 individuals have any inkling of their destiny – that they would play a major role in shaping Britain's story?

Yes – some of them were completely on the other side of the coin. Isambard Kingdom Brunel is a prime example of someone whose greatness seemed assured. He was the son of an illustrious engineer, Marc Brunel, and even his name – Isambard – literally means 'forged in iron'. In a sense, he really seemed destined to become a great engineer. His father trained him up from a very young age to follow in his footsteps, and Isambard was incredibly clever and capable.

In his twenties he worked on major projects such as the Thames Tunnel. Although perhaps it wasn't inevitable, I think Brunel was always determined to achieve big engineering feats because he was so passion-

ate. There are anecdotes from his school days of him bemusing classmates with his ability to observe whether a building was structurally sound. When it collapsed, they would find it spooky – but for him it was simply apparent because he could 'read' structures so well.

Many of these individuals – such as Westwood reimagining antecedents in her fashion – themselves took inspiration from history. How conscious of the past were your 18 personalities?

That's a great question. Take Horatio Nelson, who had an extraordinary childhood and adolescence. He was born in Norfolk; his father was a priest, and he had a pretty idyllic *Famous Five*-type upbringing. But his mother died very young, which is a common theme among lots of these famous individuals: their parents die, or they lose family members while they're still very young.

When he was just 12, Nelson joined the Royal Navy. By the time he was 18, he'd visited the West Indies and sailed to the Arctic and around the Indian Ocean. He'd also almost died of malaria and, while recuperating in the bowels of a ship, not knowing if he was going to make it home, Nelson fell into a deep depression. He just couldn't see a way forward. But the thing that brought him out of that moment were visions of patriotism and future heroism. I think that is tied up with his view of history: Nelson's uncle was a great naval man who had gained glory as a hero of Britain's maritime exploits. Of course, Nelson later became a hero himself, but before then he was aware of famous figures from British history who were inspirational to him.

How much of history is shaped by young people?

You could argue that history has largely been shaped by people we would today consider to be young. Lots of great things, as well as lots of terrible things, have been done by people who would today be deemed 'young' – under the age of 30 or 40, say.

The way to look at this is that people in the past grew up much more quickly. They were forced to become adults at an earlier age, through their own choice or otherwise. Compared with today, they had much more responsibility and were often pushed to do more.

We could learn from that. Young people are capable of a lot – when they're given the opportunity. ■



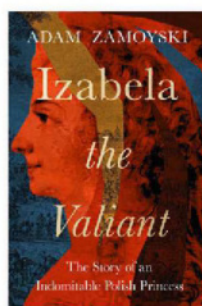
Portrait of a patriot

Kazimierz Wojniakowski's 1796 painting of Polish princess Izabela Czartoryska. During her 89 years "she lived through a period of enormous social and political change", writes Roger Moorhouse

EUROPEAN

A Pole apart

ROGER MOORHOUSE is absorbed by a little-known but politically significant Polish princess whose life encompassed the major events of the later 18th and 19th centuries



Izabela the Valiant: The Story of an Indomitable Polish Princess

by Adam Zamoyski
William Collins, 208pp, £25

Everyone had
a lockdown project.
Some of us learned

languages, or took up embroidery. Adam Zamoyski set himself the task of researching

the life of his great-great-great-grandmother, the Polish princess Izabela Czartoryska.

Born in 1746, Czartoryska was certainly a remarkable woman, not least because her exceptional longevity – she lived to the age of 89 – meant that she witnessed a period of huge upheaval. For one thing, one can see through the prism of her life the unravelling and destruction of the Polish Kingdom, which was first undermined and partitioned by its avaricious neighbours in the last quarter of the 18th century then devoured after the Napoleonic Wars. Remarkably,

Czartoryska was a subject, in turn, not only of the Kingdom of Poland but also of the Holy Roman Empire, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, the Russian empire and the Austrian empire.

More than that, she lived through a period of enormous social and political change, encompassing not only the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars but also the wider ideas of the Enlightenment, despotism and the rise of nationalism. And they were changes that she felt very personally – not least as an aristocrat, but also as one who

// It was perhaps inevitable that Czartoryska would become a cheerleader for the emerging Polish national cause //

had met many of the leading figures of the age from Benjamin Franklin to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as well as Marie Antoinette, Frederick the Great and Tsar Alexander I. One of her lovers, the Duc de Lauzun, even ended his days under a revolutionary guillotine in 1793.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, she was also very well travelled, having spent time in Prussia, France and England. She disliked the French – primarily for their seemingly effortless sense of superiority – and viewed the English only a little more favourably. In particular, she was never able to come to terms with the English climate or its society: “The one is bad for my health,” she wrote, “the other for my soul.”

Given such sentiments, and Poland’s political travails of the time, it was perhaps inevitable that Czartoryska would become a cheerleader for the emerging Polish national cause. She not only – through her husband and her son – navigated the treacherous political waters of the partitions, but also set out to collect artefacts and curiosities with relevance to Polish history.

A spiritual microcosm

Czartoryska had long been a collector of historical artefacts including works of art and ephemera, but Poland’s disappearance from the map in 1795 – and the subsequent looting of Wawel Castle in Kraków by Prussian troops – prompted her to establish what she called a “temple of memory” in the grounds of her palace at Puławy.

The resulting ‘Temple of the Sybil’, completed in the Classical style in 1801, housed Polish military standards and weapons as well as prayer books, miniatures and crucifixes. It was, as Zamoyski relates, intended to serve as a place of pilgrimage for Poles – a spiritual microcosm of the now-vanished Poland.

Hers, then, was no parochial life. She met the great and the good, conducted numerous love affairs, and participated – as far as was possible – in the wider political conversations of the day. Self-taught in matters cultural and political, she was a quick learner, with strong opinions seemingly on everything. She was also rather emotionally fragile, prone to depression and haunted by the loss of her teenage daughter Teresa, “the angelic being” whom she mourned to the end of her days.

It was a rich life, clearly, and one that Zamoyski relates with considerable aplomb. His research, relying largely on previously untapped family archives, has been exemplary, aided by the fact that his subject was such an assiduous letter writer. He sheds a light on the rather rarified atmosphere of aristocratic life in Poland: the masked balls, the affairs, the residences and retinues. The accounts for the estate at Puławy, for instance, list more than 60 staff in the household – from footmen to confectioners – as well as 40 stable staff, plus doctors, artists, poets and priests.

Beyond the domestic, and the social whirl that surrounded it, Zamoyski is perhaps at his best when describing those episodes in which his subject’s life intersected with the grand politics of the day, whether it be the baleful partitions that consumed Poland, or the invasions of the Napoleonic era. It would be the latter that brought Tsar Alexander I himself to sojourn at Puławy, where he addressed Czartoryska as “Maman” and promised to do everything he could to restore Poland.

By the time of her death in 1835, Poland had (again) risen against Russian occupation, and (again) been crushed as a result. In the decades that followed, Czartoryska’s descendants were scattered into exile, her properties looted and requisitioned, and her collection of historic artefacts hidden by a generation of patriots and well-wishers. Tellingly, the song that later became the Polish national anthem – and which was clandestinely performed at Puławy in 1830 – begins with the defiant words: “Poland has not perished yet...”

It is perhaps emblematic of the horrors endured by Poland in the century or so after her death that Czartoryska was not granted any peace, even in the grave. In 1916 and again in 1944, her body was turfed out of its coffin by Russian soldiers seeking loot. In such circumstances, it is perhaps a miracle that Izabela Czartoryska is remembered at all, let alone that she should be the subject of such an engaging and erudite biography. **E**

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Roger Moorhouse is a historian and author. His latest book is *The Forgers* (Bodley Head, 2023)

ON THE PODCAST

Amazing lives

Deputy editor **Matt Elton** picks three episodes of the *HistoryExtra* podcast profiling notable figures

The sleepless emperor



Individuals have lent their names to many things: inventions, discoveries and even nations. Yet the Eastern Roman ruler Justinian famously has a less desirable eponym: a plague.

The reasons for this, and the more positive achievements of an emperor renowned for his zeal and drive, are explored in an engrossing interview with historian Peter Sarris. historyextra.com/justinian-pod

The prophetic patriot

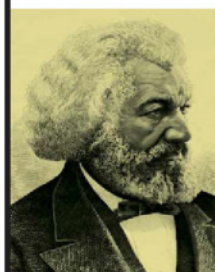


Joan of Arc’s death at the stake in 1431 ensured that she was remembered as a martyr, the ‘virgin saviour’ of the French nation. Yet does this legacy obscure the real story of the young

woman at its heart? Our interview with historian and author Anne Curry aims to set the record straight, charting the rise and fall of the peasant girl who became a patron saint.

historyextra.com/joan-arc-pod

The abolitionist orator



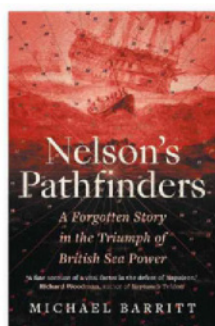
Such was the talent of 19th-century US reformer Frederick Douglass – and so deeply engrained were ideas of race and slavery – that audiences were shocked that a formerly enslaved

man could deliver words of such power. That skill, and his ability to use it to become a key voice in the civil rights movement, is a key strand of our interview with historian Clare Elliott. historyextra.com/douglass-pod

NAVAL

The battle against shipwrecks... and ignorance

ALAN FORREST is impressed by a book that charts the development of Britain's naval pathfinding corps and the pivotal role it played in controlling the growing empire



Nelson's Pathfinders: A Forgotten Story in the Triumph of British Sea Power
by Michael Barritt
Yale, 288 pages, £25

Naval pathfinding – surveying coastal waters and measuring

the depth of the seabed to ensure a safe passage for shipping – was still in its infancy in Britain in the 18th century. And, as Michael Barritt shows in this pioneering study, Britain paid a high price for its neglect. Navigational data available to sea captains was often poor, and many vessels were needlessly lost to shipwrecks. Commercial shipping returning from the Americas and naval vessels on patrol off foreign shores both suffered heavily as a result.

Sea captains needed reliable data, and they were reliant on hydrography – the science of surveying and charting bodies of water – to negotiate safe channels, to avoid running aground on rocky coasts, and to trace treacherous shoals and wrecks on the seabed. Yet for much of the 18th century, naval pathfinding was under-resourced and its use confined to the outer reaches of empire. It was only during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, when more than twice as many British warships were lost to shipwreck than to enemy action, that the Admiralty became truly convinced of its value.

The British were uncomfortably aware that their French counterparts enjoyed more sophisticated navigational data, systematically deploying maritime scientists to produce plans and charts for use in war. As early as 1720, the French had a designated cadre of specialist hydrographers, whereas Britain purchased charts from private companies, too often of uncertain accuracy.

Michael Barritt has personal experience of his subject. He is a former hydrographer of the navy, and his book bears witness to the work of his 18th-century predecessors in winning

// More than twice as many British warships were lost to shipwreck as to enemy action //

official approval for hydrography and improving the quality of naval intelligence. The hero of his study is Thomas Hurd, who campaigned tirelessly to create a unit of specialist hydrographers responsible for exploring uncharted waters, mapping shorelines and depth-sounding channels and inlets.

Hurd and others produced charts of British and French coastal waters as well as the coasts of Spain and Portugal and parts of the Baltic and Mediterranean. Their surveys were used to organise defences against invasion and to prepare naval operations at Copenhagen and in the Iberian peninsula. It's little wonder, then, that they were highly valued by the greatest naval commanders of the day, among them Horatio Nelson.

But, for all Hurd's work, British hydrographers were still under-resourced, deprived of the theodolites and chronometers they needed to complete surveys efficiently. They

conducted depth-sounding from small boats among the hazards of frontline conflict, staffed on a casual basis by volunteer seamen and by young officers applying the mathematics they had learned at school.

In 1816, following victory over Napoleon, Hurd was still campaigning for a more professional approach, noting “the expediency of selecting a certain number of officers well acquainted with the science of maritime surveying and forming them into a distinct and separate corps, something similar to that of the engineers of the army”.

This time he succeeded. The corps of pathfinders established in the postwar years would go on to provide the intelligence needed to coordinate Britain's 19th-century empire. This was not a minor change. In the author's view, it “revolutionised the British way of war at sea”.

The part played by marine surveyors during the Napoleonic Wars is indeed a “forgotten story”, which Michael Barritt has now rescued from unmerited oblivion. His book is a compelling study, beautifully illustrated with contemporary maps and surveys, reflecting their major operations across Europe and around the world. **■**

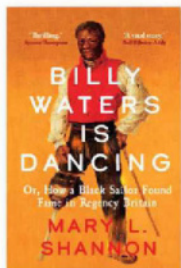
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Alan Forrest is professor emeritus in history at the University of York

All at sea A c1836 painting of the battle of Trafalgar. Prior to the Napoleonic Wars, naval pathfinding was under-resourced and neglected



SOCIAL

The man behind the Regency mask



Billy Waters Is Dancing

by Mary L Shannon

Yale, 384 pages, £25

What happens when there is scant clear historical detail about a person, but instead a litany of material that

crafts a particularly engineered idea about them? That's a question that Mary L Shannon explores in her biography of William 'Billy' Waters, a black sailor, dancer and musician who found fame in Regency London.

Waters' records chart very little: they tell us that he was born into slavery in New York, and that he had a naval pension and a wife named Elizabeth, and they link him with some locations in London. He does, though, appear more widely in newspapers, satire and plays that completely reinvent his life story. Shannon deftly draws together these parallel sets of sources to explore the life of the real man and that of his celebrity counterpart, Billy Waters.

Sensitive that her subject was rarely in charge of his own image, Shannon takes pains to look *with* Waters rather than *at* him. She contextualises his life among the veteran



Familiar figure A coloured 1822 engraving of Billy Waters, the black sailor and entertainer whose life was reinvented by Regency media. A new book "takes pains to look *with* Waters rather than *at* him", says Lizzie Rogers

sailors of Regency London, those who were poor yet talented, and those whose figures were made lore in texts such as Pierce Egan's 1820–21 novel *Life in London*. In doing so, she explores the intersection between class, race and disability in early 19th-century Britain.

We know well the Regency appetite for satire, theatre and the spectacle of the era. One of the joys of Shannon's book is her ability to examine these through a modern lens, considering how such portrayals became what we would now call memes and went viral. These practices made money out of Waters at the same time as he was being

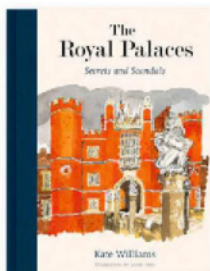
shut out of the very theatres in which white actors in blackface portrayed him.

Shannon invites us to look more closely at people like Waters – those who appear as small details in texts, footnotes to grander narratives of this period. In doing so, she honours her subject – and, above all, humanises him. The result is a masterful piece of storytelling in which the author ensures that the real Waters, and his talents, are entered into popular memory. **H**

Lizzie Rogers, historian of the 18th and early 19th centuries

ROYAL

There's no place like throne



The Royal Palaces: Secrets and Scandals

by Kate Williams

Frances Lincoln, 240 pages, £25

When Princess Elizabeth gave birth to the future King

Charles III at Buckingham Palace in 1948, she overthrew three centuries of royal precedent. The birth of the prince was not witnessed by a politician and, as such, lacked the guarantee that she did not have the infant smuggled in via a warming-pan – the accusation made of Mary of Modena at

St James's Palace in 1688. When Charles's first son, William, was born in 1982, royal tradition was further cast aside: he was born in a hospital not – like his many predecessors – in a palace.

As Kate Williams' new book demonstrates, any divergence from the monarchy's palatial foundations is a move away from royalty itself. The stories of the many royal palaces dotted across Britain – of which 30 are covered in this coffee-table-esque book – are intertwined with those of the monarchs who inhabited them.

Written with Williams' characteristic verve and authority, the book has a delightful dash of gossip Whistledown about it. In this potpourri of royal facts and insights, each palace is allocated only a few pages, making it an ideal resource for planning a palace visit, or simply a perfect dip-in read when you need a touch of royal scandal. The delightful illustrations by James Osés have a mirage-like

quality, more evocative than photos and capturing something far more elusive.

Palaces have been homes and headquarters to the royals. At times, they have also been prisons. Williams is candid about the royals' treatment of women over the generations, from the cruel death of Princess Charlotte of Wales in 1817 at Claremont House in Surrey to the furore surrounding Meghan, Duchess of Sussex.

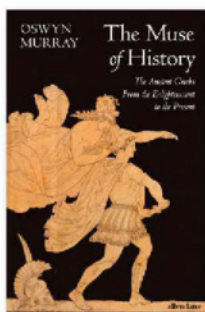
Williams' finale is saved for Windsor, which has a grand history indeed, and which continues to play a pivotal role in the lives of the royal family today. Williams' passionate, beautiful account of this palace nods not only to its fascinating history, but also delivers a respectful bow to the queen who made it her home for seven decades. **H**

Joanne Paul, historian, writer and broadcaster. Her latest book is *The House of Dudley: A New History of Tudor England* (Penguin, 2022)

ANCIENT GREECE

A masterclass in Greek

EDITH HALL is enthralled by a book that explores how views of the ancient Greeks have shifted across ages of revolution, democracy and totalitarianism



The Muse of History: The Ancient Greeks from the Enlightenment to the Present
by Oswyn Murray
Allen Lane, 528 pages, £30

This majestic book by Oswyn Murray has been long and eagerly awaited in classics circles – and its quality and scope exceed expectations. In it Murray explores how perspectives on Greek history have changed over the past three centuries, and the ways in which those shifting views reflected or shaped revolutions, wars and other pivotal events.

Now aged 87, and an emeritus fellow at Balliol College, Oxford, Murray has lived through seismic shifts in the global order. He's also witnessed – and contributed to – the transformation of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of ancient history, not only in the English-speaking world but in every European tradition, including Russian. He personally knew many of the major actors in the later chapters of the book, so his first-hand testimony is invaluable.

Murray skilfully intertwines fascinating observations on technological and legal developments in the study of Greek history –

cartography, portrait painting, architecture, printing, copyright, literature and art – with the quest for historical truth. The section on Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece* (1788), for example, is a revelation, casting new light on the influence of this crucial document of the French revolutionary-era imagination that has more typically been dismissed by historians as merely a piece of light fiction.

Murray's writing is enlivened by putting the personalities and politics of his predecessors under the spotlight. So we meet John Gast, an Irish Huguenot whose own biography illuminates his research into historical migrations. There's Cornelius de Pauw, a true revolutionary and admirer of Athenian democracy, whose insights into ancient Greek history were informed by researching natives of the Americas. And Murray also profiles the intellectual titan Arnaldo Momigliano, driven from Italy by the anti-Jewish Racial Laws of 1938, whose magnificent scholarship celebrated the ancient ideals of peace and liberty.

What really makes this book so timely, though, is its publication at a moment when democracies are under such great pressure. Murray's writing places centre-stage the multifarious evaluations and (mis)understandings of Athenian democracy that have marched in tandem with our own history since the Enlightenment. And it reveals his unwavering commitment to the need for history to be written as a pursuit of veracity – a way to understand our present, to seek some refuge from the horror of contemporary events and, perhaps, to liberate ourselves from the grievous burden of the past so that we can “plan a rational future unencumbered by the dead beliefs and charter myths” of earlier generations.

The Muse of History takes its reader on an enthralling and often depressing journey, but ends on a note of humane and dispassionate optimism. **H**

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Edith Hall is professor of classics at Durham University

// What makes this book so timely is its publication at a moment when democracies are under such great pressure //

FROM FACT TO FICTION

Love and death

Costanza Casati (pictured) discusses *Babylonia*, her novel about ancient Mesopotamia

Your new novel is set in Assyria in the ninth century BC. What inspired you to write about that place and time?

What drew me to the setting was how culturally rich the world of ancient Mesopotamia was. This was the place where writing was invented; where the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was written around 1,000 years before the *Iliad*; and where one of the first legal codes was created.

How much did you draw on historical accounts, and how much is this a new take on an ancient myth?

Babylonia is part historical fiction, part myth retelling. Semiramis and Ninus are mythical figures with historical counterparts: the former is based on Queen Sammu-ramat, the latter on King Shamshi-Adad V (ruled 824–811 BC). My novel follows the myth as recounted by ancient Greek author Diodorus of Sicily, who wrote about Semiramis's extraordinary rise to power, but it also covers historical events: for example, the rebellion that brought Shamshi-Adad V to the throne, and the battle of Dur in 814 BC.

What impressions of ancient Assyria did you aim to create?

I particularly wanted to highlight the coexistence of beauty and brutality. In one scene, Semiramis describes the bas-reliefs on an obelisk as “beautiful, though brutal”, to which Ninus replies: “my father believed brutality made things beautiful.” This is ancient Assyria in a nutshell. Interestingly, despite the constant wars and campaigns – or perhaps because of them – the Assyrians feared death more than anything else.

Their underworld was called the ‘house of darkness’ and ‘the land of no return’, where commoners sat with kings in the dust, with no light and only clay for food. Much Mesopotamian literature is about the fear of death and the quest for immortality – key themes in *Babylonia*.

Babylonia

by Costanza Casati
Michael Joseph, 432 pages, £18.99



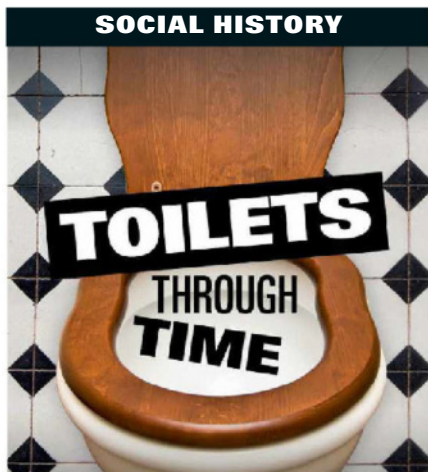
ARIANNA GENGHINI



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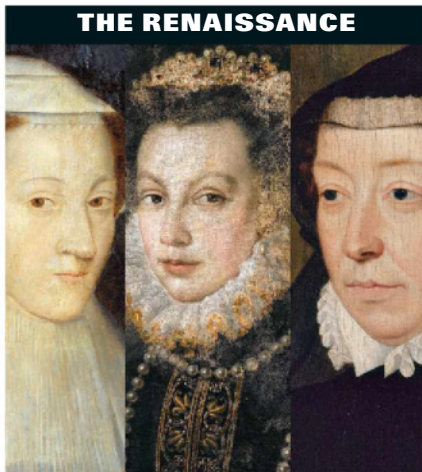
SOCIAL HISTORY



Long-lost lavatories

Why was the Devil thought to lurk in old privies? And did constipation turn Henry VIII into a tyrant? In our new series, *Toilets Through Time*, **David Musgrove** examines the history behind that most universal of all human experiences – going to the loo.

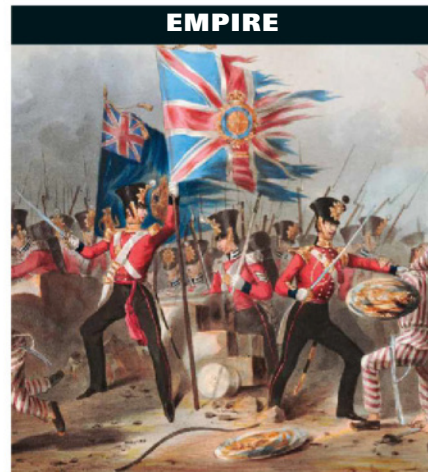
THE RENAISSANCE



Powerbroker or poisoner?

Catherine de' Medici is one of the 16th century's most formidable figures. With the return of TV's *The Serpent Queen*, based on Catherine's life, **Leah Redmond Chang** examines the legacy of a woman said to have poisoned those who stood in her way.

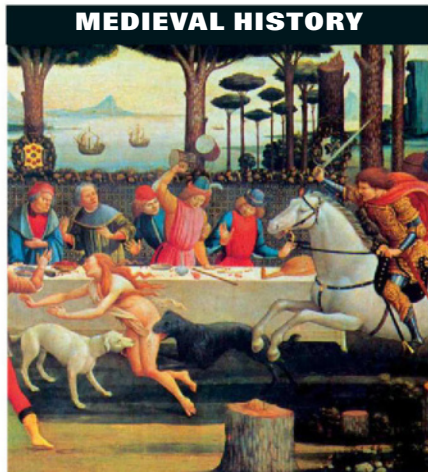
EMPIRE



Imperial echoes

Controversies surrounding the history of the British empire have intensified in recent years. A new book, *The Truth About Empire*, delves into the debate, and **Matt Elton** spoke to three of its contributors to find out how it aims to foreground historians' views.

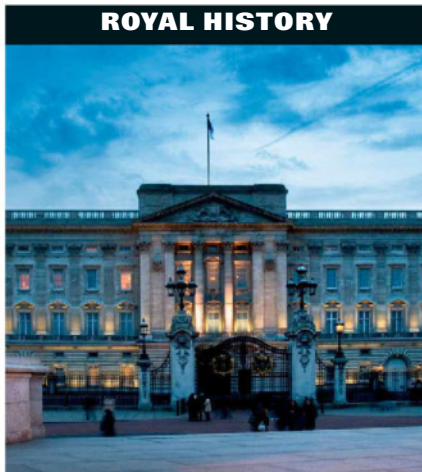
MEDIEVAL HISTORY



Plague and partying

A collection of tales set during the Black Death may not sound like the most obvious candidate for a major Netflix adaptation. But a riotous new take on Boccaccio's *Decameron* has indeed just landed on the streaming service, so we take a look back at the source material and what it can tell us about the era.

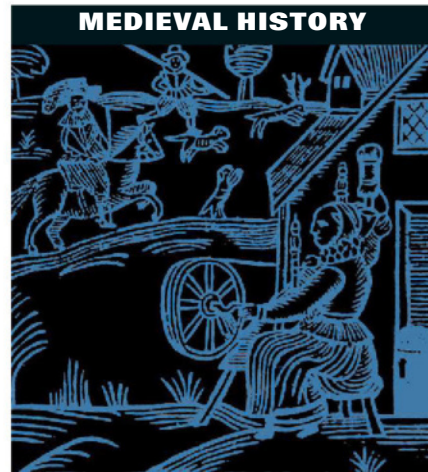
ROYAL HISTORY



Through the keyhole

The residences of kings and queens are filled with all kinds of secrets. From the fact that Queen Victoria hated Buckingham Palace, to the revelation that King Charles II had his own potions lab, **Kate Williams** shares some lesser-known stories from Britain's royal homes.

MEDIEVAL HISTORY



Practical magic

If you lost something valuable in medieval England, or wanted to improve your marriage, then you might well want to visit a cunning person. As **Tabitha Stanmore** reveals, these practitioners of magic were not strange outsiders lurking on the margins of society, but embedded in communities.

ENCOUNTERS

DIARY By Jonathan Wright and Danny Bird
HISTORY COOKBOOK Parthian chicken
CITIES Quebec City, Canada

TV

Revisiting the past

Terry Gilliam's star-studded 1981 movie *Time Bandits*, co-scripted with Michael Palin, was one of the biggest hits of the director's career – so could it really be bettered? Possibly not, but you'd have to be very grumpy indeed not to welcome this 10-part update, created by Jemaine Clement (of *Flight of the Conchords* fame), writer Iain Morris (*The Inbetweeners*) and comic actor-director Taika Waititi.

Kal-EI Tuck stars as Kevin, a history-obsessed kid who embarks on a wild adventure with a crew led, at least in her mind, by Penelope (Lisa Kudrow). Expect Kevin's knowledge of the past to be crucial as the bandits take in – among other destinations in time and space – the construction of Stonehenge, the Harlem Renaissance and the Trojan Wars.

Time Bandits

Apple TV+ / streaming now



The TV reboot of *Time Bandits* sees history-obsessed Kevin (Kal-EI Tuck, centre) plunging back into the past accompanied by a cast led by Lisa Kudrow (far left)



What's on this week?

Visit [historyextra.com](https://www.historyextra.com) for updates on upcoming history TV and radio programmes



EXHIBITIONS

Dora Maar: Behind the Lens

Amar Gallery, London / Ends 18 August / amargallery.com

There's still just time to see the work of one of the 20th century's most famous photographers this summer. At the Amar Gallery you can discover the multifaceted talent of Dora Maar, long overshadowed by her reputation as one of Picasso's lovers. Featuring her surrealist works, including rare photographs of Picasso's *Guernica*, the exhibition reveals how |Maar extended her artistry to poetry and painting to become far more than merely Picasso's 'Weeping Woman'.

Money Talks: Art, Society & Power

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford / 9 August 2024–5 January 2025 / ashmolean.org

Delve into the interplay between currency and art in this exhibition featuring more than 100 items by artists ranging from Rembrandt to Banksy. It showcases money's artistic journey from design to mass

production, exploring its cultural impact and popular perceptions of power and value. Highlights include works by Andy Warhol and Grayson Perry, rare coins designed for the curtailed reign of Edward VIII, and Susan Stockwell's intriguing *Money Dress* (left).

Turner: Art, Industry & Nostalgia

Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne / Ends 7 September / laingartgallery.org.uk

Discover the cultural legacy of the industrial revolution via this evocative

exhibition centred on Turner's masterpiece *The Fighting Temeraire*. Displays cover the rise of steam power and its impact on Britain, particularly through the shipbuilding heritage of north-east England. Turner's portrayal of the final voyage of one of the ships present at the battle of Trafalgar, pulled by steam tugboats, encapsulates the narrative of industrial progress and nostalgia.

Featuring more than 20 other works by Turner, alongside pieces by Lowry and Whistler, this is a vivid exploration of art's meditation on industry and its role in Britain's changing landscape. **RE**

Jessica Ennis-Hill, here celebrating her silver medal in the 2016 Rio Olympics, features in the new series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*



TV

Relative values

It's testament to the power of the stories it reveals that *Who Do You Think You Are?*, the doyen of celebrity genealogy shows, has been on air since 2004 – and is showing no signs of looking dated or tired. Indeed, thanks to the digitisation of records and the rapid development of DNA research, the show is arguably getting more ambitious with every passing series, its researchers better able to tease out the hidden stories of its subjects' forebears.

This year's line-up of celebs is as eclectic as ever, ranging from actor Vicky McClure – who learns about her great-grandfather's harrowing experiences as a prisoner of war – to former Spice Girl Melanie Chisholm (Mel C) and Olympic champion athlete Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill.

Who Do You Think You Are?

BBC One / mid-August



Pampinea (Zosia Mamet), left, and Misa (Saoirse-Monica Jackson) are among Florentines fleeing the Black Death in Netflix's adaptation of *The Decameron*

TV

Plague, pestilence and partying

It's 1348, and the Black Death has hit Florence. To escape the pandemic, a group of nobles and their servants retreat to a grand villa in the countryside, hoping (the nobles, at least) to enjoy a luxurious holiday. But things don't quite work out that way.

Loosely based on a 14th-century story collection by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75),

this eight-part dark comedy follows what happens when a battle for survival and the breakdown of a stratified social order intrude on days of wine and sex. The ensemble cast includes Zosia Mamet (*Girls, Mad Men*) and Saoirse-Monica Jackson (*Derry Girls*).

The Decameron

Netflix / streaming now

ALAMY/NETFLIX/ASHMOLEAN



British archaeologist Mark Horton explores the story of the lost 16th-century Roanoke colony in a new documentary

TV

Vanishing act

What happened to the 100-plus settlers who landed on Roanoke Island off the coast of what's now North Carolina in 1587? Just three years later, the first English colonists in the New World had vanished without a trace. Over four centuries on, it's still unclear exactly what happened – a gap in knowledge that's all too often been filled by wild speculation.

One credible idea to explain the disappearance, advanced by American historian Scott

Dawson and British archaeologist Mark Horton, is that the colonists were assimilated into the local Croatoan population and began new lives on nearby Hatteras Island. A new documentary explores this theory by following recent archaeological work, and also tells the story of the Tudor-era colony.

The Lost Colony of Roanoke

PBS America / Monday 5 and Tuesday 6 August



TV

The psychology of crime

Based on a series of novels by British author Frank Tallis, *Vienna Blood* is a crime drama that sees Max Liebermann (Matthew Beard), a student of Sigmund Freud, offering psychological insights to assist Oskar Rheinhardt (Juergen Maurer), a detective with Vienna's police force.

For the fourth series, it's 1909, and the murders of an arms dealer and a public official cause disquiet in the Austro-Hungarian capital. As Rheinhardt and Liebermann investigate, they realise the killings are related to a conspiracy that reaches into the very heart of government.

You can catch up on the first three series on BBC iPlayer. **B**

Vienna Blood

BBC Two / August

Juergen Maurer (left) and Matthew Beard star in *Vienna Blood*, a crime drama set in the capital of the Austro-Hungarian empire

RADIO HIGHLIGHTS

Persons of interest

In May 1964, gospel singer and guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1915–73) gave a performance of 'Didn't it Rain' that has become integral to her legend, filmed by Granada Television in appropriately soggy conditions at Manchester's disused Wilbraham Road railway station (pictured below). But who *was* Tharpe?

As **Archive on 4: Sister Blues** (BBC Radio 4, Saturday 10 August) recounts, Tharpe was dubbed both 'the original soul sister' and the 'godmother of rock'n'roll', reflecting her status as a singer of formidable power and a trailblazing electric guitar player who influenced everyone from Chuck Berry to Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. Presented by the singer-songwriter Joan Armatrading, the documentary also highlights Tharpe's importance as a black, female and queer artist.



Also in the **Archive on 4** strand is **Nixon: A Resigning Matter** (Saturday 3 August), in which journalist Michael Goldfarb looks back at the resignation of Richard Milhous Nixon. And later in the series, **The Ascent of Jacob Bronowski** (Saturday 17 August) profiles the Polish-British philosopher and scientist whose 1973 BBC Two show *The Ascent of Man* made him one of the most famous public intellectuals of his day. The documentary explores lesser-known facets of Bronowski's life: his Second World War work on optimising the area bombing of German cities, and his surveillance by MI5.

In **American Socialist** (BBC Radio 4, Sunday 18 August), historian Jill Lepore explores the life of Socialist Party of America leader Eugene V Debs, who famously stood for president while in jail. Meanwhile, **Becoming German** (BBC Radio 4, Sunday 4 August) looks at how British Jews and their descendants are taking back German citizenship stripped from them by the Nazis. It's presented by Lois Pryce, whose guests include Matt Lucas and Ben Elton.

Finally, in a new series of **Great Lives** (BBC Radio 4, Monday 5 August), episodes feature Miriam Margolyes discussing Charles Dickens, and Julien Temple on Christopher Marlowe. **B**

RECIPE

Parthian chicken

ELEANOR BARNETT recreates an ancient Roman dish that borrowed flavours from a rival neighbouring empire in the Middle East

According to ancient Roman natural philosopher Pliny the Elder, Apicius was “the most gluttonous gorgier of all spendthrifts”. The cookbook attributed to him, known simply as *Apicius* or as *De Re Coquinaria* (On the Art of Cooking), is one of the oldest collections of recipes surviving from antiquity. Its author may have been Marcus Gavius Apicius, a Roman gourmet of the first century AD who reputedly travelled all the way from Campania to Libya on the hunt for the largest, juiciest prawns.

Many historians have suggested that the recipe collection was compiled later and simply named after him, or that Apicius had become a kind of nickname for cooks and gourmets rather than referring to any one person in particular. In any case, this book offers a unique and tantalising insight into the tastes and cookery techniques of the Roman world, possibly as long as 2,000 years ago. There is plenty to delight and intrigue in its pages. This was a recipe book for those working in the kitchens of the elites, rich in spices and containing many exotic ingredients – even including flamingo!

Flicking through Apicius in search of a recipe to test, I settled on Parthian chicken – a dish named, somewhat surprisingly, after



Parthian chicken is flavoured with asafoetida, a spice imported to ancient Rome from Afghanistan

one of Rome’s rivals to the east: the Parthian empire, centred on what’s now Iran. The chicken is beautifully moist, cooked in a sauce unlike anything I’ve tasted before.

The flavour that makes it ‘Parthian’ is asafoetida (from *asa*, meaning resin, and *foetidus*, Latin for ‘smelling fetid’) – a dried gum resin, extracted from the roots of a herb native to the mountains of Afghanistan, which travelled via trade routes to the Roman empire. As its name suggests, this pungent powder smells of eggs, earning it the disparaging epithet ‘devil’s dung’. A similar spice called silphium, native to north Africa, had been used previously in ancient Roman cooking but had been harvested to extinction by the first century AD; Nero reputedly consumed the last ever sprig.

Lovage is another ingredient less familiar to us today. Also native to Afghanistan and Iran, it has long been cultivated in Europe. It was probably the seeds or leaves of this hardy, celery-like herb that were used in ancient cooking; you can use celery seed or ajwain seed to get a similar flavour.

Parthian chicken also contains *liquamen*, a fish sauce similar to *garum*, which was commonplace in Roman cookery. It was made by fermenting fish with salt for up to four months; this produced a paste called *allec* that settled at the bottom, and which could be used as a pickle in its own right, as well as liquid used as fish sauce. A Thai fish sauce such as *nam pla* makes a good substitute, though the Roman version would likely have been less salty. **H**

Serves: 3–4

Difficulty: 1/10

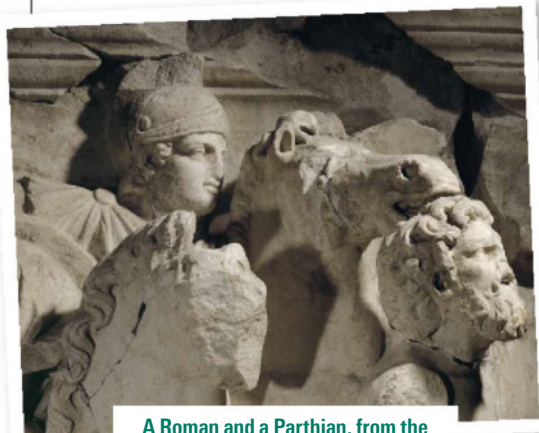
Time taken: 1 hour

INGREDIENTS

4 pieces chicken (whatever cut you prefer)
1½ tsp peppercorns
1 tsp lovage seeds (alternatively, use ajwain seeds or celery seeds)
1 tsp caraway seeds
½ tsp asafoetida powder (alternatively, use 8 minced garlic cloves)
250ml white wine
1 tbsp olive oil plus extra for frying
3 tbsp fish sauce

METHOD

1. Preheat your oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.
2. Sear the chicken in a frying pan with some olive oil until the skin is crispy.
3. Toast the lovage and caraway seeds and asafoetida in a dry frying pan for two or three minutes to release their flavours, then add the peppercorns and grind into a powder.
4. Mix the powder with the fish sauce, wine and 1 tbsp olive oil.
5. Put the chicken in a casserole dish and cover with the sauce.
6. Roast for about 40 minutes. Add an extra sprinkle of pepper to serve.



A Roman and a Parthian, from the empire centred on what’s now Iran, on a second-century AD monument



Eleanor Barnett is a food historian at Cardiff University and @Historyeats on Instagram. Her book, *Leftovers: A History of Food Waste and Preservation* (Apollo), is out now

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Quebec City in five places

From a French trading post to the capital of British North America, the Canadian city has a storied past. **DAVID MENDEL** suggests five unmissable sights

1 Seminary of Quebec A vision of old New France

In 1608, French explorer Samuel de Champlain established the trading post that became Quebec City, with the permission of the indigenous Innu people he'd encountered on an earlier trip to the area; such alliances with native communities were crucial in the years that followed. For the first few decades the settlement remained very small, but in 1663 Louis XIV decided to make Quebec the capital of the royal province of New France. Naturally, religion was part of the plan.

That year, François de Laval, first bishop of New France, founded the Seminary of Quebec to train young men for priesthood in the growing colony. It still stands in the Old Upper Town, beside the Catholic basilica. Entering through an archway, you feel as if you've been transported to Europe. Whitewashed buildings with steep, French-style roofs flanking a courtyard give a real sense of what the city was like under the French regime. Over one door is a sundial displaying the Latin motto *Dies nostri quasi umbra* ("our days flee like a shadow"). Fences along the roof edge are there to prevent ice from falling on the students' heads below.

Today, Laval University's School of Architecture is housed in the oldest wings. The students' studios, located in former dormitories on the top floor, were once dubbed *La Sibérie* because it was freezing up there in winter. These rooms, not normally open to the public, retain the 18th-century roof structure.



The seminary is one of the city's oldest and grandest buildings, and has a distinctly French feel



Quebec's citadel was built by the British in the early 19th century, following American attacks on the city

The convent's chapel, though modern, houses statuary dating back to the early 18th century



2 Ursuline Convent Early learning

Even before the priests' seminary was established, nuns had arrived at the site of Quebec City. Members of the Ursuline order came here in 1639, and their first convent was completed two years later – including the first girls' school on the North American continent.

Though the first iteration of the building burned down, and the site was later damaged by shelling during the British siege of Quebec in 1759, you can still see the Saint-Augustin and Saint-Famille wings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. The chapel, though rebuilt in 1901, is adorned with gilded wooden sculptures from the early 18th century. And in the convent museum, you can see altar frontals made with silver and gold threads and the finest silks, created by the nuns who brought their skills in needlecraft with them when they sailed across the Atlantic in 1639.



3 Fortifications of Quebec Walk of fame

Quebec is famously the only walled city in North America, and you can still walk around nearly 3 miles of ramparts. Defences were built and updated from the earliest days of Champlain's settlement, albeit initially fairly rudimentary ones; more sturdy barriers were erected in 1690. But in the 1740s, the French – rattled by the military attentions of the British – built substantial western ramparts, though they still relied on the cliffs overlooking the St Lawrence and St Charles rivers for defence.

After Britain took the city, American forces attacked in 1775, prompting the British to complete the walls around the city; the star-shaped citadel was built between 1820 and 1831. Both the citadel and the fortification walls – which together comprise a National Historic Monument – provide spectacular views.

4 Plains of Abraham Conclusive clash

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the British were determined to take full control of North America, and attacked Quebec on several occasions. In 1759, at the famous siege and battle of the Plains of Abraham, they finally took the city – though both British general Wolfe and French general Montcalm were mortally wounded in the clash.

Today, the site of the battlefield is a magnificent city park, a legacy of the tricentenary of Quebec in 1908. Earl Grey, the governor general of Canada at the time, led a campaign to raise money to create the park and also to build an enormous statue dedicated to peace, which would have been slightly taller than the Statue of Liberty. He didn't get enough money for the statue, but the base that was built for it is now a lookout. There's also a monument marking the spot where General Wolfe died, and British Martello towers, designed to prevent American artillery from getting close enough to the city to fire on it.



British-built Martello towers were designed to keep American artillery at bay

The cathedral's modest exterior belies the splendours inside

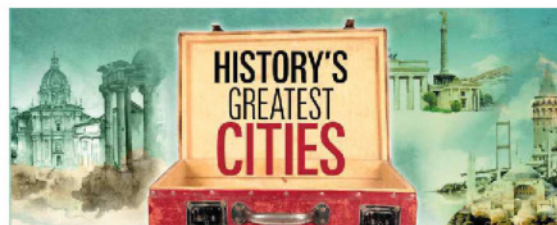


5 Cathedral of the Holy Trinity Britain stamps its mark

After the American Revolution, Quebec City became the capital of Britain's North American territories – and that meant the construction of official buildings. One such was the first Anglican cathedral outside the British Isles. Paid for by the crown and completed in 1804, the cathedral was designed by two artillery officers who were inspired by London's church of St Martin-in-the-Fields. It houses a royal pew bearing the coat of arms of George III, as well as monuments commemorating the British aristocrats who passed through the city regularly – as colonial administrators, governors and senior military officers. One monument honours the fourth Duke of Richmond, who served as governor-in-chief of British North America before his death in 1819.

There's also a moving memorial to fallen soldiers – one of them a Quebec-born officer who fought for the British empire in Afghanistan in the 1840s, and died leading his troops in a charge in India. So here's a half-English, half-French soldier, born in a French-speaking city that was a British colonial capital – it gives you a sense of this city's complex identity. **H**

David Mendel is a historian, speaker, tour guide and author of numerous books about Quebec City. He was talking to travel writer Paul Bloomfield, the host of our podcast series History's Greatest Cities



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PRIZE CROSSWORD

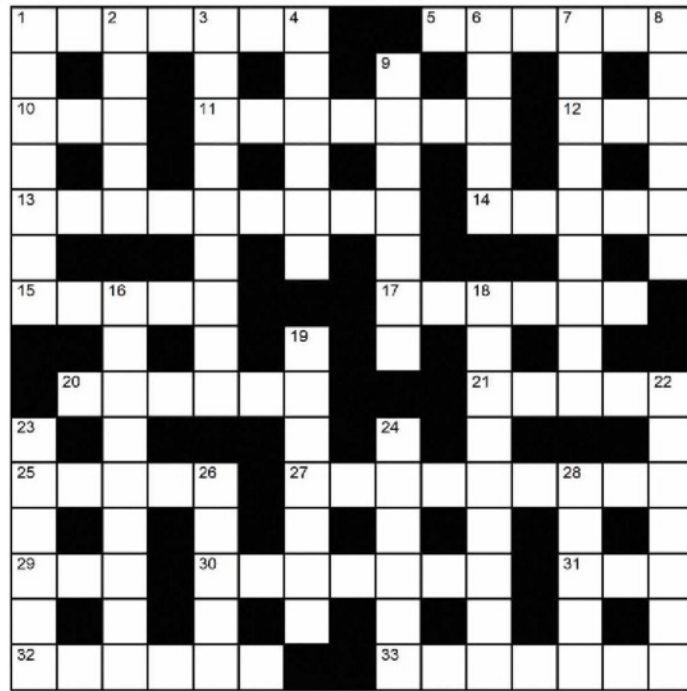
Across

- 1 US journalist Ida _____, whose investigative work in the early 1900s exposed the Standard Oil company's aggressive monopoly (7)
 5 Turkic dynasty prominent in the Middle East in the 11th and 12th centuries (6)
 10 See 12 across
 11 Ottawa chief, great leader of inter-tribal resistance against 18th-century British rule in the Great Lakes area of North America (7)
 12/10 across '____ and ____', an old English law requiring a person spotting a crime to raise the alarm and pursue the felon (3/3)
 13 Name adopted by a number of environmental political parties emerging in the 1970s (3,6)
 14 Buckland Abbey, Devon was the home of this 16th-century privateer (5)
 15 Adjective, in use from the 1970s, applied to precision-guided bombs, for example (5)
 17 Capital of Manipur state, site of a notable British victory over the Japanese in 1944 (6)
 20 German county that gave its name to a royal house and a Caribbean capital (6)
 21 Ancient Greek writer renowned for his fables (5)
 25/33 across Legendary Vietnamese siblings who led resistance against the Chinese in the first century AD (5,7)
 27 Jewish fast day giving its name to a war between Israel and Egypt/Syria in 1973 (3,6)
 29 Old cloth measure based on the length of a man's forearm (3)
 30 People of a former Italian maritime republic, a great rival of Venice (7)
 31 Seventh/eighth-century King of Wessex, famed for his code of laws (3)
 32 Region centred on present-day Nova Scotia, originally colonised by France (6)
 33 See 25 across

Down

- 1 Emperor Marcus Claudius _____ or famed Roman historian Publius Cornelius _____ (7)
 2 Henry _____, one half of a famous British car manufacturing partnership established in the early 20th century (5)
 3 Longer of the two rivers that defined the region called Mesopotamia (9)
 4 Weapons used in eg jousting (6)
 6 Legendary Castilian warrior of the 11th century who became a Spanish hero (2,3)
 7 One of America's founding fathers, who succeeded Washington as US president (4,5)

Which hero of Greek myth beheaded the snake-haired Gorgon Medusa? (22 down)



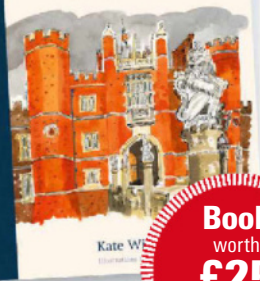
Which famed English privateer lived at Buckland Abbey? (14 across)

- 8 So-called 'showgirl', a major figure in the Profumo Affair that helped topple Macmillan's government (6)
 9 Craft such as the *Hindenburg*, destroyed in a catastrophic disaster of 1937 (7)
 16 Last effective ruler of the Inca empire (9)
 18 Jewish sect opposing the Sadducees that flourished in the Second Temple period (9)
 19 City of Henan province, one of China's 'Four Great Ancient Capitals' (7)
 22 In Greek mythology, the hero who beheaded the Gorgon Medusa (7)
 23 The _____ Front (1935), a coalition of France, Britain and Italy that opposed Hitler's threatened rearmament (6)
 24 The 1802 treaty signed here in France achieved a brief period of peace during the Napoleonic Wars (6)
 26 Great Italian operatic tenor who was a favourite of, and honoured by, Mussolini (5)
 28 Anglo-American political author of *Common Sense*, the pamphlet that helped inspire the American Revolution (5)

Compiled by Eddie James

The Royal Palaces

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By Kate Williams

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Solution to our July 2024 crossword

- Across** 6 Ptolemy 7 Mugwump 10 Hatshepsut 11 Goya 12 Blanke 13 Brougham 15 Aethelflaed 19 Scarface 20 Trajan 21 Spas 23 Abolition 24 Arapaho 25 Fairfax.
Down 1 St Pauls 2 Alison Weir 3 Ampere 4 Dust Bowl 5 Umayyad 8 Wig 9 Isabel Peron 14 Grenadiers 16 Hiawatha 17 Sceptre 18 Farnham 20 Taiwan 22 SDP.

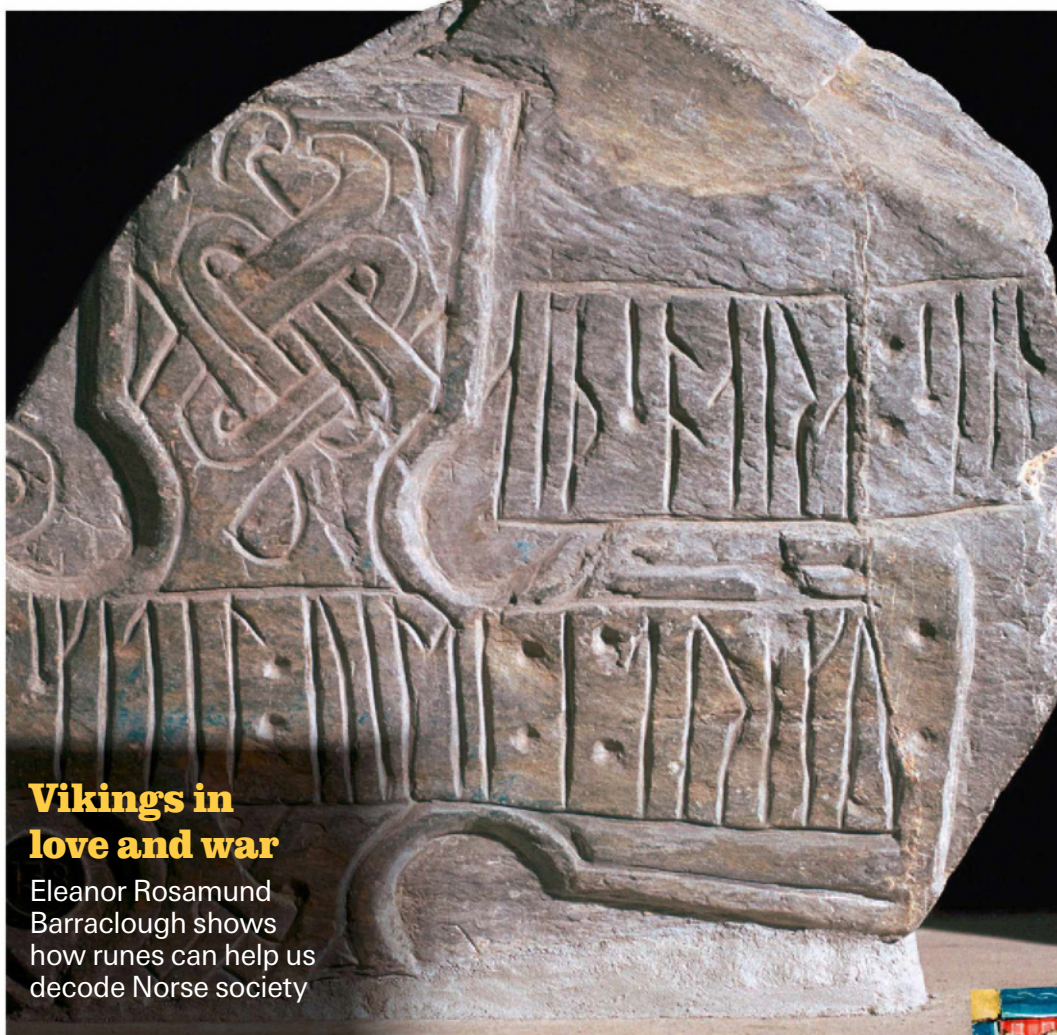
Five winners of The D-Day Atlas by Charles Messenger:

S Graves, Sheffield; Andy Gilbert, Newcastle upon Tyne; Eleanor Lees, Isle of Man; Michael Payne, Jersey; Austin Baird, Cramlington

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Vikings in love and war

Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough shows how runes can help us decode Norse society



The directions of history

Jerry Brotton heads back to the ancient world to explore the origins of the four points of the compass



Fighting for the past

Robert Bartlett considers the fate of historical manuscripts during times of war and destruction



Pigs in the city

Dolly Jørgensen explains why these farmyard animals were a ubiquitous part of urban life in the Middle Ages

How to become a warrior king

Dan Jones reveals how Henry V learned the tools of successful medieval monarchy in his early years

The toilet revolution

David Musgrove takes us on a tour of Britain's latrines, from the Roman age to the Victorians



MY HISTORY HERO

Nasa's Head of Science **Nicola Fox** chooses

Marie Curie

1867–1934



Marie Curie, pictured in the early decades of the 20th century. As well as conducting pioneering research, “she also believed in giving something back to society”, says Nicola Fox

IN PROFILE

Marie Curie, born Maria Skłodowska in Warsaw, was a naturalised-French physicist and chemist. She conducted groundbreaking research into radioactivity, and was the first person to win two Nobel Prizes – in physics, with her husband Pierre in 1903, and in chemistry in 1911. She was also the first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris. A mother of two, she died aged 66 from aplastic anaemia, likely the result of repeated exposure to radiation.

“She was not a ‘Look at me – I’m so awesome’ type, but thought of herself as part of a partnership with her husband, Pierre”



Nicola ‘Nicky’ Fox is the British-born associate administrator for Nasa’s Science Mission Directorate. After completing a PhD at Imperial College, London, she moved to the US and has held various senior roles at Nasa

When did you first hear about Curie? As a child of eight, when I was at primary school. We were studying people who’d made a difference in the medical field, including Marie Curie. The fact that she was not only a woman, married and with a family, but was also a scientist who won the Nobel Prize, had a big impact on me.

What kind of woman was she? She achieved so many firsts. Not only was she the first woman to win the Nobel Prize, but she won it in two different categories: chemistry and physics. She was also a professor at the Sorbonne, and discovered radium and polonium. Yet she was not a “Look at me – I’m so awesome” type, but thought of herself as part of a partnership [with her husband, Pierre], and kept looking towards the next scientific breakthrough. She also believed in giving something back to society: she founded the Curie Institute in Paris, which specialises in cancer research. It wasn’t all about her.

What made her a hero? The fact that she achieved all these firsts over a century ago, when it was hard for women to attain prominence as a result of their own achievements. Can you imagine the hurdles she faced all those years ago? Yet she notched up a string of hugely important scientific achievements – and used those discoveries to impact on so many other significant areas. It takes most winners a lifetime to get a Nobel Prize. But, eight years after winning one with her husband, she got another. That’s mindblowing! I also love the fact that she was a family person and had a happy home life.

What was Curie’s finest hour? Doing things like separating radium from radioactive residue in large quantities, and developing a mini X-ray that could be used on the battlefield, are what make her a hero to me. And I think she would have regarded those achievements as her finest hour, rather than the accolades she received.

Can you see any parallels between her life and your own? Like her, I’m passionate about STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] education, and about encouraging our next generation of scientists and engineers. At Nasa, I’ve worked as part of a team with a shared goal – to get a mission from concept into space – in the same way that Marie saw herself as part of a team focused on achieving a scientific breakthrough. And we both lost our husbands when our children were young. Her husband died in a road accident, aged 46, and my husband, John, died from an aortic aneurysm in 2010, aged 49. We both had to carry on and provide for our families.

What would you ask Curie if you could meet her? I’d love to ask if she had any tips for a better work-life balance. **H**

Nicola Fox was talking to York Membery



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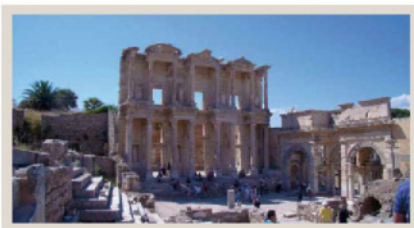
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